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THE INNER LIFE

THEOSOPHICAL TALKS AT ADYAR

(FIRST SERIES)

THE INNER LIFE

BY

C. W. LEADBEATER

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FOREWORD

OUR evening 'Talks' at the Theosophical Headquarters at Adyar have become quite an institution, and a very considerable amount of information, due to new research, often arising from some question put by a student, is given in this friendly and intimate circle. Our good Vice-President, Sir S. Subramania Iyer, found so much help and illumination from these talks, that he earnestly wished to share his pleasure with his brethren in the outer world, and gave a sum of money to help in their publication. I cordially endorse his view of their value, and commend this volume and those which will follow it to the earnest study of all our members. A second series is ready for the press, but the date of its issue will depend partly on the reception given to the present.

ANNIE BESANT

AUTHOR'S NOTE

WHILE the President was absent from Adyar on a tour through England and America last year, it fell to my lot to take charge of the daily meetings of the students here. In the course of that time I delivered many informal little addresses and answered hundreds of questions. All that I said was taken down in shorthand, and this book is the result of those notes. In a number of cases it happened that what was said on the roof at the meetings was afterwards expanded into a little article for *The Theosophist* or *The Adyar Bulletin*; in all such cases I reprint the article instead of the stenographic report, as it has had the advantage of certain corrections and additions. Necessarily a book of this sort is fragmentary in its nature; necessarily also it contains a certain amount of repetition; though this latter has been excised wherever possible. Many of the subjects treated have also been dealt with in my earlier books, but what is written here represents in all cases the result of the latest discoveries in connection with those subjects. The subjects have been classified as far as possible, and this volume represents the first series, containing five sections. The second volume, containing the nine remaining sections, is now in the printer's hands. A list of the subjects of which it will treat will be found at the end of this volume.

ADYAR, *July* 1910.

C. W. LEADBEATER

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First Section

The Great Ones

and

the Way to Them

THEOSOPHICAL TALKS

AT

ADYAR

FIRST SECTION

THE GREAT ONES

STUDENTS of Occultism—even those who have been students for many years—sometimes seem to fail to realise the Masters as They truly are. I have often found people thinking of Them as some kind of angels or devas, or, at any rate, as so far removed from us by Their greatness that it is scarcely possible for us to derive much help from Them. Their greatness is indisputable, and from that point of view the gulf between Them and ourselves may well seem incalculable in its extent; and yet from another point of view They are very close to us,

so that Their sympathy and help are very near and very real. That our thought on the subject may be clear, let us first of all try to define exactly what we mean by the term "Master."

We mean by it always one who is a member of the Great White Brotherhood—a member at such a level that He is able to take pupils. Now the Great White Brotherhood is an organisation unlike any other in the world, and for that reason it has often been misunderstood. It has sometimes been described as the Himālayan or the Tibetan Brotherhood, and the idea has been conveyed of a body of Indian ascetics residing together in a monastery in some inaccessible mountain fastness. Perhaps this has arisen largely from the knowledge of the fact that the two Brothers principally concerned in the foundation and work of the Theosophical Society happen at the moment to be living in Tibet, and to be wearing Indian bodies. To comprehend the facts of the case it may be better to approach its consideration from another point of view.

Most of our students are familiar with the thought of the four stages of the Path of Holiness, and are aware that a man who

has passed through them and attained to the level of the Asekha has achieved the task set before humanity during this chain-period, and is consequently free from the necessity of reincarnation on this planet or on any other. Before him then open seven ways, among which he must choose. Most of them take him away from this earth into wider spheres of activity, probably connected with the solar system as a whole, so that the great majority of those members of our humanity who have already reached this goal have passed entirely out of our ken.

The limited number who are still working directly for us may be divided into two classes—those who retain physical bodies, and those who do not. The latter are frequently spoken of under the name of Nir-mānakāyas. They hold themselves suspended as it were between this world and nirvāna, and They devote the whole of Their time and energy to the generation of spiritual force for the benefit of mankind. This force They pour into what may be described as a reservoir, upon which the Masters and Their pupils can draw for the assistance of Their work with humanity. The Nir-mānakāya, because He remains to this extent

in touch with the lower planes, has been called 'a candidate for woe,' but that is misleading. What is meant is that He has not the joy of the higher work, or of the nirvānic levels. He has chosen to remain upon lower planes in order to help those who still suffer. It is quite true that to come back from the higher life into this world is like going down from the fresh air and glorious sunlight into a dark and evil-smelling dungeon; but the man who does this to help some one out of that dungeon is not miserable and wretched while there, but full of the joy of helping, notwithstanding the greatness of the contrast and the terrible feeling of bondage and compression. Indeed, a man who refused such an opportunity of giving aid when it came to him would certainly feel far more woe afterwards, in the shape of remorse. When we have once really seen the spiritual misery of the world, and the condition of those who need such help, we can never again be careless or indifferent about it, as are those who have not seen.

Fortunately those of us who have seen and realised this have ever at our

command a means whereby we can quite really and definitely help. Tiny though our efforts may be as compared with the splendid outpouring of force of the Nirmānakāya, we also can add our little drops to the great store of force in that reservoir. Every outpouring of affection or devotion produces a double result—one upon the being to whom it is sent, and another upon ourselves, who sent it forth. But if the devotion or affection be utterly without the slightest thought of self, it brings in its train a third result also. Ordinary affection or devotion, even of a high kind, moves in a closed curve, however large that curve may be, and the result of it comes back upon the sender. But the devotion or affection of the truly unselfish man moves in an open curve, and though some of its effects inevitably react upon the sender, the grandest and noblest part of its force ascends to the Logos Himself, and the response, the magnificent response of benediction which instantly pours forth from Him, falls into that reservoir for the helping of mankind. So that it is within the power of every one of us, even the weakest and the poorest, to help the world in this most beautiful

manner. It is this adding to the reservoir of spiritual force which is really the truth that lies at the back of the Catholic idea of works of supererogation.

The still more limited number of adepts who retain physical bodies remain in even closer touch with us, in order to fill certain offices, and to do certain work necessary for our evolution; and it is to the latter that the names of the Great White Brotherhood and the Occult Hierarchy have sometimes been given. They are, then, a very small number of highly advanced men belonging not to any one nation, but to the world as a whole. On the physical plane They do not live together, though They are of course in continual communication on higher planes. Since They are beyond the necessity of rebirth, when one body wears out They can choose another wherever it may be most convenient for the work They wish to do, so that we need not attach any special importance to the nationality of the bodies which They happen to be wearing at any particular time. Just now, several of those bodies are Indian, one is Tibetan, one is Chinese, two at least are English, one is Italian, one Hungarian, and

one Syrian, while one was born in the island of Cyprus. As I have said, the nationality of these bodies is not a matter of importance, but I mention these in order to show that it would be a mistake to think of the ruling Hierarchy as belonging exclusively to one race.

Reverence restrains us from saying much of the great Head of this Hierarchy, in Whose hands is the fate of the continents, in Whose name all initiations are given. He is one of the very few now remaining upon earth of the Lords of the Flame, the Children of the Fire-mist, the great beings who came down from Venus nearly eighteen million years ago to help and to lead the evolution of humanity on our chain. These Great Ones did not take bodies from our then entirely undeveloped humanity, but made for themselves bodies in appearance resembling ours by the force of Their will, a kind of permanent materialisation. At that period, and for long after it, no members of our humanity were sufficiently developed to fill any of the higher offices in this Hierarchy, and consequently we needed and received this help from without. Gradually, as humanity has evolved,

it has become more and more able to provide for itself, and the great Lords of the Flame have been set free to go to the help of yet other evolutions. But one of Them still holds this, the highest office of all—the position of the KING Who guides and controls all evolution taking place upon this planet—not only that of humanity and of the animal, vegetable, mineral and elemental kingdoms below it, but also of the great non-human kingdoms of the nature-spirits and the devas, some of which rise so far above it.

Under Him are various Heads of Departments, the broad outlines of whose work are more within our comprehension than His. Though the details are far beyond us, we can form some slight idea of what must be the manifold responsibilities and activities of the Manu of a Root-race; and perhaps we can to some extent image to ourselves the duties of Him who is Minister of Religion in this world-kingdom—who sends forth religion after religion, suiting each to the needs of a particular type of people and to the period of the world's history in which it is launched, sometimes deputing one of His subordinates to found it, sometimes even incarnating Himself for

that purpose, as He may see fit. This Minister of Religion is often called in the East the Bodhisattva—one who is about to become a BUDDHA. The previous holder of that high office was He whom we call the Lord Gautama BUDDHA. The attainment of Buddhahood is not simply the gaining of enlightenment; it is also the taking of a great and definite initiation, and the man who has taken that step cannot again incarnate upon earth, but hands over His work to His successor, and usually passes away altogether from any connection with earth.

The Lord Gautama, however, still remains to a certain extent within touch of the world, in order that He may still be able to help it. Once in each year He still shows Himself to the brotherhood of adepts, and pours down His blessing upon them, to be passed through them to the world at large; and He may still be reached in certain ways by those who know how. Mrs. Besant has told us, in some of her recent writings, how He incarnated over and over again as the great teacher of the earlier sub-races of the Āryan race,—how He was Hermes, the founder of the Egyptian Mysteries—also the first and greatest Zoroaster, the original founder of the worship

of the sun and fire, and again He was Orpheus, the founder of the Greek Mysteries. Those mentioned of course were not His only births, for in the course of our researches into the past we have seen Him as founder of other religions than these.

The statement made in some of the earlier Theosophical works that He was reborn as Shankarāchārya is an error, for from an occult point of view the two great teachers were on entirely different lines. There was, however, a certain reason at the back of the statement in the fact that some of the vehicles prepared by one of them were also utilised by the other, as Madame Blavatsky has explained in the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine*.

The deep reverence and the strong affection felt for the Lord Gautama all over the East are due to two facts. One of these is that He was the first of our humanity to attain to the stupendous height of Buddhahood, and so He may be very truly described as the first-fruits and the leader of our race. (All previous BUDDHAS had belonged to other humanities, which had matured upon earlier chains.) The second fact is that for the sake of hastening the progress of humanity, He took upon Himself certain additional labours

of the most stupendous character, the nature of which it is impossible to comprehend. It is stated that when the time came at which it was expected that humanity would be able to provide for itself some one who was ready to fill this important office, no one could be found who was fully capable of doing so. But few of our earthly race had then reached the higher stages of adeptship, and the foremost of these were two friends and brothers whose development was equal. These two were the mighty Egos now known to us as the Lord Gautama and the Lord Maitreya, and in His great love for mankind the former at once volunteered to make the tremendous additional exertion necessary to qualify Him to do the work required, while His friend and brother decided to follow Him as the next holder of that office thousands of years later.

In those far-off times it was the Lord Gautama who ruled the world of religion and education ; but now He has yielded that high office to the Lord Maitreya, whom western people call the Christ—who took the body of the disciple Jesus during the last three years of its life on the physical plane ; and those who know tell us that it will not be

long before He descends among us once again, to found another faith. Anyone whose mind is broad enough to grasp this magnificent conception of the splendid reality of things will see instantly how worse than futile it is to set up in one's mind one religion as in opposition to another, to try to convert any person from one to another, or to compare depreciatingly the founder of one with the founder of another. In the last case indeed it is especially ridiculous, because the two founders are either two pupils of the same school, or two incarnations of the same person, and so are entirely in accord as to principles, though They may for the time be putting forward different aspects of the truth to suit the needs of those to whom They speak. The teaching is always fundamentally the same, though its presentation may vary widely. The Lord Maitreya had taken various births before He came into the office which He now holds, but even in these earlier days He seems always to have been a teacher or high-priest.

It is now generally known that the two Masters who have been most intimately concerned with the foundation and the work of the Theosophical Society have taken respect-

ively the offices of temporal and spiritual leader of the new sixth root-race, which is to come into existence in seven hundred years' time. The Manu, or temporal leader, is practically an autocratic monarch who arranges everything connected with the physical-plane life of the new race, and endeavours in every way to make it as perfect an expression as possible of the idea which the Logos has set before Him for realisation. The spiritual teacher will be in charge of all the various aspects of religion in the new race, and also of the education of its children. It is clear that one of the main objects of the foundation of the Theosophical Society was that these two Masters might gather round Them a number of men who would be intelligent and willing co-operators in this mighty work. Round Them will be grouped others who are now Their pupils, but will by that time have attained the level of adeptship.

We may then set before ourselves as a goal the privilege of being chosen to serve Them in this wonderful work for the world which lies before Them. There will be ample opportunity for the display of all possible varieties of talent, for the work will be of

the most varied character. Some of us will no doubt be attracted to one side of it and some to the other, largely according to the predominance of our affection for one or other of its great Leaders. It has often been said that the characteristic of one is power, and of the other love and compassion, and this is perfectly true, though, if it is not rightly understood, it may very easily prove misleading. One of the Masters concerned has been a ruler in many incarnations, and was so even in the earlier part of this one, and unquestionably royal power shows forth in His every gesture and in the very look of His eyes, just as surely as the face of His brother adept beams ever with overflowing love and compassion. They are of different rays or types, have risen to Their present level along different lines, and this fact cannot but show itself; yet we should mistake sadly if we thought of the first as in any degree less loving and compassionate than His brother, or of the second as lacking anything of the power possessed by the first. Other Masters also will be engaged in this work, and it may well be that some of us may have made our link through one of Them.

It is probable that even the Masters who are by name best known to you are not so real, not so clear, not so well-defined to you as They are to those of us who have had the privilege of meeting Them face to face and seeing Them constantly in the course of our work. Yet you should endeavour by reading and thinking of Them to gain this realisation, so that the Masters shall become to you not vague ideals but living men—men exactly as we are, though so enormously more advanced in every respect. They are men most emphatically, but men without failings, and so to us They seem like gods on account of the power, love and compassion radiating from Them. It is most significant that, in spite of the awe necessarily produced by the sense of this tremendous power, in Their presence one never feels in the least afraid or embarrassed, but always uplifted.

The man who stands before one of Them cannot but feel the deepest humility, because of the greatness of the contrast between himself and the Master. Yet with all this humility he yet feels a firm confidence in himself, for since the Master, who is also man, has achieved, that achievement is clearly possible

even for him. In His presence everything seems possible and even easy, and one looks back with wonder on the troubles of yesterday, unable now to comprehend why they should have caused agitation or dismay. Now at least, the man feels, there can never again be trouble, since he has seen the right proportion of things. Now he will never again forget that, however dark the clouds may be, the sun is ever shining behind them. The vibrations of the Masters are so strong that only those qualities in you which harmonise with them are called out, so that you will feel the uttermost confidence and love, and the desire to be always in His presence. It is not that you forget that you have undesirable qualities in you, but you feel that now you can conquer them, and you do not in the least mind His knowing all about them, because you are so certain that He understands perfectly, and to understand all is to pardon all.

It may perhaps help us to realise the human side of our Masters if we remember that many of Them in comparatively recent times have been known as historical characters. The Master K. H., for example, appeared in Europe as the philosopher

Pythagoras. Before that He was the Egyptian priest Sarthon, and on yet another occasion chief-priest of a temple at Agadé, in Asia Minor, where He was killed in a general massacre of the inhabitants by a host of invading barbarians who swooped down upon them from the hills. On that occasion He took immediately the body of a Greek fisherman, which had been drowned in his attempt to escape, and in that body the Master journeyed on to Persia, where He rendered great assistance to the last of the Zoroasters in the founding of the modern form of the Mazdayaznian religion. Later He was the flamen of the Temple of Jupiter in Rome, and later still Nagārjuna, the great Buddhist teacher. We have found Him many times in our researches into the past lives of some members of our group, but almost always as a priest or teacher.

Again, in these researches into the remote past we have frequently found the disciple Jesus, who in Palestine had the privilege of yielding up His body to the Christ. As a result of that act He received the incarnation of Apollonius of Tyana, and in the eleventh century He

appeared in India as the teacher Rāmānujāchārya, who revived the devotional element in Hindūism, and raised it to so high a level.

No doubt some of you have heard a good deal, about other Masters besides the two who principally take charge of Theosophical work. Another Master, for example, dictated for us *Light on the Path* and *The Idyll of the White Lotus*, while yet another has taken charge of a great deal of the work in Europe, and has written for us some of the most splendid works in the whole realm of literary activity. Then the one who was once the disciple Jesus stands ready especially to guide the various activities of the Christian Churches. Yet another looks especially after the work here in India.

Thus it may be seen that the evolution of the world is by no means left to itself, to get along as best it may, as people so often rashly suppose; on the contrary, it is being elaborately and carefully governed and directed. For this Hierarchy of adepts is actually managing it, as far as it is possible to manage it while leaving its inhabitants their own free-will. The members of the Brotherhood, through Their agents, are

constantly trying to work with the important people of the world, putting advice and suggestions into their minds, endeavouring to move them onwards towards the great future of Universal Brotherhood when war shall have disappeared. But we must remember that the karma of all the people concerned has to be considered and respected. It would no doubt be easy to force the world along at a far more rapid rate, but that would not be for the real advantage of the people concerned. The Master K. H. once said in a letter which I received from Him: "Of course I could easily tell you exactly what to do, and of course you would do it, but then the karma of the act would be mine and not yours, and you would gain only the karma of prompt obedience."

Men have to learn to be not merely intelligent servants; they have to learn to be co-workers, because they themselves will have the same work to do some day, and if they are to be fit for greater responsibilities in the future they must be willing to take up the smaller responsibilities now. Sometimes, it is true, a really great opportunity or responsibility of world-wide importance comes to one of

us, but that may perhaps be once in many hundreds of lives. When it comes we shall take it or miss it, according as we have or have not been in the habit of taking the smaller opportunities of daily life, so that we have got into the habit of doing the right thing, and shall do it automatically at the critical moment. Our opportunities of doing good or harm are usually but small as regards the world as a whole; but when we have learnt invariably and automatically to choose the right in these smaller matters, the Great Brotherhood will feel it safe to trust us in larger matters.

It is indeed well that we should try to understand these Great Ones, not as a mere matter of curiosity and interest, but in order that we may realise Them as They are, and comprehend that They are men just as we are, varying among Themselves just as we vary, although at so much higher a level. Wisdom, power and love are present in all of Them equally, yet They are by no means all alike. They are individuals just as we are. They are at the top of the ladder of humanity, but let us not forget that we are somewhere on its lower rungs, and that one day we

also shall reach Their level and stand where They stand.

One important fact about Them is Their all-round development. If we examine ourselves we shall be sure to find that we are to some extent disproportionate in our development—one-sided in certain respects. Some of us are full of scientific faculty and intellectual development, but sadly lacking in devotion and compassion; others are full of whole-souled devotion, but defective on the intellectual side. A Master is perfect along both these lines, as may easily be seen when we think of the splendid intellect of Pythagoras along with the love and compassion of the Master K. H.

We must not misunderstand Their wonderful knowledge. In order to attain the level of adeptship They must have cast off among others the fetter of avidyā or ignorance, and it is often said that to cast off ignorance one must attain all-knowledge. Yet we know from personal acquaintance with Them that this is not so in the mere literal sense; for example, there are Masters who do not know all languages, others who are not artists and musicians, and so on. I think

that what is really meant by casting off the fetter of ignorance is the acquisition of a power by which They can at any moment command any knowledge upon any subject which They happen to require. They certainly have not all facts stored within Their physical brains, but equally certainly They can very quickly obtain any knowledge of which They have need. As to the question of languages, for example, if a Master wishes to write a letter in a language which He does not know, He very frequently employs the brain of a pupil who is acquainted with that language, throwing the ideas into that pupil's brain, and then employing the words in which He sees them clothe themselves. If a man speaks to Them in a language which They do not understand, They can instantly grasp on the mental plane the thought that lies behind the incomprehensible words.

It is often asked whether an ordinary man who met a Master on the physical plane would instantly recognise Him as such. I do not see any reason why he should. He would certainly find the Adept impressive, noble, dignified, holy and serene. He could hardly fail to recognise that he

was in the presence of a remarkable man; but to know certainly that that man was an adept it would be necessary to see His causal body, which of course the ordinary man could not do. In that causal body the development would show by its greatly increased size, and by a special arrangement of the colours, which would differ for each of the seven great types. But all this would be quite out of the reach of the ordinary man whom we are postulating.

Adepts have no definite external peculiarities by which They may be recognised, though there is a great calmness and benevolence common to Them all; Their faces are stamped always with a joyous serenity, the peace which passeth all understanding. Most of Them are distinctly handsome men, because Their physical bodies are perfect, for They live in an absolutely hygienic way, and above all. They never worry about anything. In the case of most of us there is still a great deal of karma of various kinds to be worked out, and among other things this modifies the appearance of our physical bodies. In Their case all karma is long ago exhausted, and consequently the physical body is a perfect expression on the physical plane of

the Augoeides or glorified body of the Ego. Not only therefore is the body of a Master usually splendidly handsome, but also any new body that He may take in a subsequent incarnation will be an almost exact reproduction of the old one, because there is nothing to modify it.

Another remarkable fact is that They are able to preserve Their physical bodies very much longer than we can—owing no doubt to the perfect health and absence of worry which we have already mentioned. Almost all of the Masters whom we know appear as men in the prime of life, yet in many cases there is testimony to prove that Their physical bodies must have long passed the ordinary age of man. I have heard Madame Blavatsky say that her Master as He appears now does not look a day older than when she first saw Him in her childhood sixty years before. In one case only, that of a Master who has recently attained adeptship in the body which He is still wearing, there is a certain ruggedness in the face, which is doubtless the result of some remainder of past karma brought over into this incarnation, but I think we may feel sure that when He chooses to take another

body that characteristic will not persist.

Probably They are more silent than most men; busy people have not much time for casual talk, and They are out of all proportion the busiest people in the world. Their pupil Madame Blavatsky was the most brilliant conversationalist that I have ever met, but she never made talk for the sake of making it. So with Them; a Master never speaks without a definite object in view, and His object is always to encourage, to help or to warn. He speaks always gently and with the greatest kindness, though He often betrays a very keen sense of humour; yet the humour itself is always of the kindly order, and is used never to wound, but always to lighten the troubles of the way, or to soften some necessary rebuke. Certainly a man who has no sense of humour would not be likely to make much progress in occult matters.

The number of adepts who retain physical bodies in order to help the evolution of the world is but small—perhaps some fifty or sixty in all. But it must be remembered that the great majority of these do not take pupils, as They are engaged in quite other work. Madame Blavatsky

employed the term adept very loosely, for in one place she actually speaks of adepts who have been initiated, and adepts who have not been initiated. In all later writings we have reserved the word "initiate" for those who have passed at least the first of the four great stages upon the Path of Holiness, and the word adept we have restricted to those who have attained the Asekha level, and so have finished the evolution required of them in this chain of worlds. The consciousness of the Asekha rests normally upon the nirvānic or ātmic plane while his physical body is awake. But out of the number who have already attained adeptship only the very small proportion above-mentioned retain physical bodies, and remain in touch with the earth in order to help it; and out of this a still smaller proportion are willing under certain conditions to accept men as pupils or apprentices; and it is to these last (the smallest number) only that we give the name of Masters. Yet few though They be Their office is of incalculable importance, since without Their aid it would be impossible for man to enter the portals of initiation.

THE WORK OF THE CHRIST

You ask about the Great One whom we call the Christ, the Lord Maitreya, and about His work in the past and in the future. The subject is a wide one—one also about which it is somewhat difficult for us to speak with freedom, on account of the restrictions with which we are hedged round. Possibly the suggestion may be of use to you that there is what we may call a department of the inner government of the world which is devoted to religious instruction—the founding and inspiring of religions, and so on. It is the Christ who is in charge of that department; sometimes He Himself appears on earth to found a great religion and sometimes He entrusts such work to one of His more advanced assistants. We must regard Him as exercising a kind of steady pressure from behind all the time, so that the power employed will flow as though automatically into every channel anywhere and of any sort which is open to its passage; so that He is working simultaneously through every religion, and utilising all that is good in the way of devotion and self-sacrifice in each.

The fact that these religions may be wasting their strength in abusing one another upon the physical plane is of course lamentable, but it does not make much difference to the fact that whatever is good in each of them is being simultaneously utilised from behind by the same great Power. This is true of course of all movements in the world; every ounce of the good in them is being used as a channel, while the evil in them is in each case just so much regrettable waste of force which might have been utilised if the people had been more sensible. The section in the Secret Doctrine entitled *The Mystery of Buddha* gives a good deal of information as to the relations between the Heads of this department of Religion, and it may give some useful hints as to the Christ also. This is a subject of paramount interest to the members of our Society, since one of our Masters has a specially close relation with that department.

As to the approaching advent of the Christ and the work which He has to do, you cannot do better than read Mrs. Besant's book on *The Changing World*. The time of His advent is not far distant, and the very body which He will take is even

already born among us.

All this was decided many thousands of years ago—some of it decided apparently in minute detail, though it would seem that there is a good deal of flexibility with regard to other points. The utter certainty with which these Great Ones lay Their plans many thousands of years ahead is one of the most wonderful features of this stupendous work that They do. Sometimes it is open to those of us who have been able to develop the faculties of the higher planes to be allowed a glimpse of Their mighty schemes, to witness the lifting of a tiny corner of the veil which shrouds the future. Sometimes also we have glimpsed Their plans in another way, for in looking back into the records of the distant past we have found Them making prophecies, the fulfilment of which is even now passing before our eyes.

I know of nothing more stirring, more absorbingly interesting, than such a glimpse. The splendour, the colossal magnitude, of Their plans takes away one's breath, yet even more impressive is the calm dignity, the utter certainty, of it all. Not individuals only, but even nations are the pieces in this game; but neither

nation nor individual is compelled to play any given part. The opportunity to play that part is given to it or to him; if he or it will not take it there is invariably an under-study ready to step in and fill the gap. But, whoever may be the instrument, this one thing at least is utterly certain, that the intended end will be achieved; through whose agency this will be done matters very much to the agent but nothing at all to the total progress of the world. Nineteen hundred years ago Apollonius of Tyana was sent out by the Brotherhood upon a mission, one feature of which was that he was to found, in various countries, certain magnetic centres. Objects of the nature of talismans were given to him, which he was to bury at these chosen spots, in order that the force which they radiated might prepare these places to be the centres of great events in the future. Some of those centres have already been utilised, but some have not, and all these latter are to be employed in the immediate future in connection with the work of the coming Christ. So that much of the detail of His work was already definitely planned nearly two thousand years ago, and

arrangements even on the physical plane were being made to prepare for it. When once we realise this utter certainty, doubt and hesitation, anxiety and worry, all fade away and we gain a perfect peace and content, and the most absolute confidence in the Powers who are governing the world.

THE WORK OF THE MASTERS

The work of the Masters on Their own planes is not easy for us to comprehend, though we can readily see that Their activity must be tremendous. The number of adepts still retaining physical bodies is but small, and yet in Their hands is the care of all the evolutions which are taking place on this globe. As far as humanity is concerned They seem to divide the world into parishes, but Their parishes are continents, and an adept is appointed to look after each. The Theosophical Society appears to be rather of the nature of a mission sent out from Headquarters, so that those who take part in its activities are working not for any particular parish or any parti-

oular form of religion, but for humanity as a whole; and it is upon humanity as a whole, or at least upon humanity in the mass, that the Masters chiefly act. They have a department which devotes itself to endeavouring to influence in the right direction the important people of the world—to affect kings and statesmen in the direction of peace, to impress more liberal ideas upon great preachers and teachers, to uplift the conceptions of artists, so that through them the whole world may be made a little happier and a little better.

But the working of such departments as these is mainly entrusted to Their pupils, They themselves dealing rather with the egos in their causal bodies; They devote themselves to pouring spiritual influence upon them—raying out upon them as the sunlight radiates upon the flowers, and thereby evoking from them all that is noblest and best in them, and so promoting their growth. Many people are sometimes conscious of helpful influences of this description, but are quite unable to trace them to their source. The causal body of the average man has as yet almost no consciousness of anything external to itself on its own plane.

It is very much in the condition of the chicken within the egg, which is entirely unconscious of the source of the heat which nevertheless stimulates its growth. When any person reaches the stage where he breaks through his shell, and becomes capable of some sort of response, the whole process takes on a different form, and is enormously quickened. Even the group-souls of animals on the lower part of the mental plane are greatly affected and assisted by such influence, for like sunlight the force floods the entire plane and affects to some extent everything which is within its radius. In pouring out this force the Masters frequently take advantage of special occasions and of places where there is some strong magnetic centre. Where some holy man has lived and died, or where some relics of such a person create a suitable atmosphere, They take advantage of such conditions and cause Their own force to radiate along the channels which are already prepared. When some vast assemblage of pilgrims comes together in a receptive attitude, again They take advantage of the occasion by pouring Their forces out upon the people through the channels

by means of which they have been taught to expect help and blessing.

It is owing to assistance of this nature given to us from above that humanity has progressed even to its present position. We are still in the fourth round, which should naturally be devoted to the development of desire and emotion, and yet we are already engaged in the unfolding of the intellect, which is to be the special characteristic of the fifth round. That this is so is due to the immense stimulus given to our evolution by the descent of the Lords of the Flame from Venus, and by the work of the adepts who have preserved for us that influence and steadily sacrificed Themselves in order that we might make the better progress.

Those who understand anything of this work, and most especially those of us who have been privileged to see the Masters doing it, would never for a moment think of interrupting Them in such altruistic labour as this by propounding any personal requests. The vast importance of the work which They are doing, and the enormous amount of it, make it obviously impossible that They should take up personal work with

individuals. In the cases where such work has to be done it is always delegated to pupils or performed by means of elementals and nature-spirits. Therefore it becomes emphatically the duty of the student to fit himself to do some of this lower work, for the very good reason that if he does not do so, the work will for the present be left undone, since it would be obviously impossible for the Masters to turn aside from Their far greater work for the whole world to attend to individual cases. The work of the invisible helpers on the astral plane would simply not be done unless there were pupils at the stage where that is the best work that they can do; for so soon as they pass beyond that stage and can do higher work, the higher work will certainly be given to them.

People sometimes ask why the Masters so often work through imperfect instruments; the answer is obviously because They have not time to do the work themselves, and They must therefore employ such instruments as They have, or the work will not be done at all. Take for example the writing of books for the helping of humanity. It is obvious that the Masters could do this very far

better than any of Their pupils can, and by doing it They could entirely avoid any possibility of erroneous or imperfect statements. But They have absolutely no time to devote to such work, and therefore if it were not done by pupils it would remain undone. Besides, if the Masters did it They would take away the opportunity of making good karma from those who can do it—certainly not as well as They, but yet after all well enough for the use of those who know so very much less.

We must remember that every Master has at His command only a certain amount of force which, enormous as it seems to us, is still a limited quantity, and it is His duty to employ this force to the best possible advantage for the helping of humanity. Therefore it would, if we may say so without irreverence, be absolutely wrong for Him to waste that force upon anything lower than the very highest that it can reach, or to spend upon individual cases, however deserving, that which can be so much better employed for the welfare of all.

MASTERS AND PUPILS

It has already been said that out of the comparatively small number of adepts who retain Their physical bodies and fill the offices connected with the administration of the world under the Great Hierarchy, there is a still smaller number who accept pupils, and to whom therefore we give the name of Masters. Let us see then what it means to be a pupil of one of these Masters, what is expected of one who aspires to this position and what is the work which he has to do.

First let us have it clearly in our minds that the Masters have absolutely dedicated themselves to the service of humanity, and that They are utterly absorbed in the work to the entire exclusion of every other consideration. In speaking to you on this subject before, I have mentioned that a Master has only a certain definite amount of force to expend, and that though the amount of that force seems to us almost incalculable, He is nevertheless exceedingly careful to use every ounce of it to the best possible advantage. Obviously to take in hand and instruct a pupil will

make some demand upon His time and upon this store of energy, and since He regards everything from the standpoint of its use in regard to the promotion of evolution He will not expend this time and energy upon any man unless He can see that it is a good investment.

He will take a man as a pupil, or perhaps we should rather say as an apprentice, when He sees that the amount of time and strength spent in training him will produce more result eventually than any other way of expending the same amount—*but not otherwise*. For example, a man might have many qualifications which would make him useful as an assistant, but at the same time some one great fault which would be a constant obstacle in his way, which would nullify much of the good that he might otherwise do. No Master would accept such a man as a pupil; but He might say to him: "Go to work and conquer that special fault of yours, and when you have succeeded I will take you as my assistant, and will train you further."

So many of our earnest students are full of the most benevolent and altruistic feeling, and, knowing themselves to be

in this way very different from the majority of mankind, they sometimes say to themselves "I am so deeply anxious to work for humanity; why will not the Master take me in hand and train me?"

Let us face the facts boldly. The Master will not train you because you are still full of all sorts of minor imperfections. It is quite true, as you no doubt feel within yourselves, that your benevolence, your kindness, your earnest wish to be helpful, are far greater things on the credit side of the account than are all these small faults on the debit side. But try to realise that there are thousands of people in the world who are benevolent and well-meaning, and that you differ from them only in the fact that you happen to have a little more knowledge, and so you are able to direct your benevolence into more definitely useful channels than those others. If these were all the qualifications required for discipleship, each Master might have thousands of pupils, and His whole time would be taken up in endeavouring to bring into shape those few thousands of people, with all their petty little faults on the astral and physical planes, and in the meantime

the Master's splendid work with the egos on the higher levels would have to be entirely neglected.

First of all then, to be a pupil of a Master means that one must look upon life as the Master looks upon it, solely from the point of view of what is best for the progress of the world. The pupil must be prepared *absolutely* to forget himself, to sink his personality *entirely*, and he must understand that this is *not* a mere poetical figure or a fashion of speech, but that it means just exactly what it says—that he must have no personal desires whatsoever, and must be willing to order the whole of his life according to the work that he has to do. How many of us are there who are whole-heartedly willing to take even this first step towards accepted discipleship?

Think what it means to become a disciple. When any man offers himself for such a position the Master will at once say whether or not He considers him fit to enter upon the stage of the probationary pupil. If the candidate appears to be reasonably near the possession of the necessary qualifications the Master may take

him upon probation, which means that he will remain for a period of some years under very close observation. Seven years is the average time of this probation, but it may be indefinitely lengthened if the candidate should prove unsatisfactory, or on the other hand it may be much shortened if it is seen that he has really taken himself in hand. I have known it to be extended to thirty years; I have known it to be reduced to five years, and even to three, and in one quite exceptional case it was only five months. During this period of probation the pupil is not in any sense in any kind of direct communication with the Master; he is little likely to hear or to see anything of Him. Nor as a general rule are any special trials or difficulties put in his way; he is simply carefully watched in his attitude towards all the little daily troubles of life. For convenience of observation the Master makes what is called a "living image" of each such probationary pupil—that is to say, an exact duplicate of the man's astral and mental bodies. This image He keeps in a place where He can easily reach it, and He places it in magnetic *rapport* with the man

himself, so that every modification of thought or of feeling in the man's own vehicles is faithfully reproduced in the image. These images are examined daily by the Master, who in this way obtains with the least possible trouble a perfectly accurate record of His prospective pupil's thoughts and feelings, and from this He is able to decide when He can take him into the far closer relationship of the second stage—that of the accepted pupil.

Remember that the Master is a channel for the distribution of the forces of the Logos, and not only a mere unconscious channel but a keenly intelligent co-operator; and He is this because He is himself consciously a part of the Logos. Just in the same way at a lower level the accepted pupil is a channel for the forces of the Master, but he, too, must be not an unconscious channel but an intelligent co-operator, and in order to be this he must also become virtually part of the consciousness of the Master.

An accepted pupil is taken into his Master's consciousness to so great an extent that whatever he sees or hears is within the knowledge of his Master—not that the

Master necessarily sees or hears it at the same moment (though that often happens) but that it lies within the Master's memory exactly as it does within the memory of the pupil. Whatever the pupil feels or thinks is within the astral and mental bodies of his Master. When we realise all that this means, we see very clearly why it would be utterly impossible for the Master to accept any pupil until the pupil's thoughts and feelings were such as the Master would wish to harbour within himself.

It unfortunately sometimes happens that there comes into the mind of the pupil some thought which is not fit to be harboured by the Master, and as soon as the Master feels that, He at once erects a barrier and shuts off from himself that vibration, but to do this diverts His attention for a moment from His other work, and takes a certain amount of energy. Once more we see clearly that it would be impossible for a Master to take into such a relation with himself one who often indulged in thoughts unfit for the Master's mind; to have to be continually or even frequently turned aside from His work in order to shut off

undesirable thoughts or feelings would clearly be a quite intolerable tax upon the Master's time and strength.

It is not because of any lack of compassion or patience that a Master could not take such a man; it is simply that it would not be a good use either of His time or of His energy, and to make the best possible use of both of them is His simple duty. If a man feels himself worthy to be accepted as a pupil, and wonders why this privilege has not already been extended to him, let him watch himself closely for even a single day, and ask himself whether during that day there has been in him any single thought or feeling which would have been unworthy of the Master. Remember that not only definitely evil or unkind thoughts are unworthy of Him, but also trifling thoughts, critical thoughts, irritated thoughts—above all, thoughts of self. Who of us is sufficient for these things?

The effect which the Master seeks to produce by this wonderfully close association is the harmonising and attuning of the pupil's vehicles—the same result which an Indian teacher tries to gain by keeping his disciples

always in his neighbourhood physically. Whatever may be the special kind of exercises or the special course of study prescribed, in all cases the principal effect upon the pupil is that produced not by either exercises or study, but by being constantly in the presence of the teacher. The various vehicles of the pupil are vibrating at their accustomed rates—probably each of them at many and various rates, due to the constant presence of passing emotions and wandering thoughts of all kinds. The first and most difficult task of the pupil is to reduce all this chaos to order—to eliminate the host of minor interests, and control the wandering thoughts, and this must be achieved by a steady pressure of the will exercised upon all his vehicles •through a long period of years.

While he still lives in the world the difficulty of this undertaking is multiplied a hundredfold by the ceaseless pressure of disturbing waves of thought and emotion, which give him no moment of rest, no opportunity to collect his forces in order to make a real effort. This is why in India the man who wishes to live the higher life . retires to the jungle—why, in all

countries and in all ages, there have been men willing to adopt the contemplative life of the hermit. The hermit at least has breathing-space, has rest from the endless conflict, so that he can find time to think coherently. He has little to hinder him in his struggle, and the calm influences of nature are even to a certain extent helpful.

But the man who lives perpetually in the presence of one already upon the Path has a still greater advantage. Such a teacher has by the hypothesis already calmed his vehicles and accustomed them to vibrate at a few carefully selected rates instead of in a hundred promiscuous frenzies. These few rates of vibration are very strong and steady, and day and night, whether he is sleeping or waking, they are playing unceasingly upon the vehicles of the pupil, and gradually raising him to his teacher's key. Nothing but time and close association will produce this effect; and even then not with every one, but only with those capable of being attuned. Many teachers require to see a reasonable proportion of this result before they will impart their special methods of occult development; in other words, before teaching a pupil some-

thing which may easily do him much harm if wrongly used, they wish to be certain by ocular demonstration that he is a man of the type to which this instruction is appropriate, and is sufficiently amenable to their influence to be held in the right way by it when the strain comes. A thousand times greater are the advantages gained by those whom the Master selects—who thus have the opportunity of such close and intimate contact with Him.

This then is what is meant by being an accepted pupil of the Master—that the man becomes a kind of outpost of that Master's consciousness, so that the strength of the Great Ones may be poured out through him, and the world may be definitely the better for his presence in it. The pupil is so closely in touch with the Master's thought that he can at any time see what that thought is upon any given subject, and in that way he is often saved from error. The Master can at any moment send a thought through that pupil either in the form of a suggestion or a message. If, for example, the pupil is writing a letter or giving a lecture, the Master is subconsciously aware of that fact, and may at any moment throw into the mind

of the pupil a sentence to be included in that letter or a useful illustration for that lecture. In earlier stages the pupil is often unconscious of this, and supposes these ideas to have arisen spontaneously in his own mind, but he very soon learns to recognise the thought of the Master. Indeed, it is eminently necessary that he should learn to recognise it, because there are many other entities on the astral and mental planes who are very ready in the most friendly way and with the best intentions to make similar suggestions, and it is assuredly well that the pupil should learn to distinguish from whom they come.

We must not however confuse such use by a Master of his pupil's body with the mediumship which we have so often characterised as objectionable. For example, there have been some occasions on which one or other of our Masters has spoken through our President, and it has been stated that on such occasions sometimes her very voice and manner and even her features have been changed. But it must be remembered that in all such cases she has retained the fullest consciousness and has known exactly who was speaking and why.

That is a condition so different from what is ordinarily understood by mediumship that it would be quite unfair to call it by the same name. There can be no objection to such use of a pupil's body, but it is only in the case of a very few pupils that the Masters have ever done this.

When it happens, the President's consciousness is just as fully active in her physical brain as ever, but instead of directing her organs of speech herself she listens while the Master makes use of them. He formulates the sentences in His own brain and then transfers them to hers. While this is being done she can use her own brain-power, as it were passively, to listen, to understand, and to admire; but I conceive that it would hardly be possible for her at absolutely the same moment to compose a sentence upon some quite different subject. I suppose that the highest form of spiritualistic control may more or less approximate to this, but probably very rarely, and hardly ever completely.

The influence of a Master is so powerful that it may well shine through to almost any extent, and any one of the audience who is readily impressible might be

conscious of His presence even to the extent of seeing His features or hearing His voice, instead of those of His pupil. It is not very probable that any actual physical change takes place, such as would be visible to non-sensitive spectators. In spiritualism I have indeed seen cases in which the medium's voice and manner, and even his very features, were actually physically entirely changed, but that always means a complete supersession of his ego by the entity speaking through him, and this would be quite foreign to the system of training adopted by our Masters.

There is yet a third stage of even more intimate union, when the pupil becomes what is called the "son" of the Master. This is accorded only after the Master has had considerable experience of the man as an accepted pupil, when He is quite certain that nothing can arise in the mind or astral body of the pupil which will ever need to be shut off. For that is perhaps the principal difference which can be readily explained on the physical plane between the position of the accepted disciple and of the "son"—that the accepted disciple, though truly a part of the Master's consciousness,

can still be shut off when it seems desirable, whereas the "son" is drawn into a union so close and so sacred that even the power of the Master cannot undo what has been done to the extent of separating these consciousnesses even for a moment.

These then are the three stages of the relation of a pupil to his Master; first, the probationary period, during which he is not in any real sense a pupil at all; second, the period of accepted discipleship; third, the period of "sonship." It must be clearly understood that these relations have nothing whatever to do with initiations or steps on the Path, which belong to an entirely different category, and are tokens of the man's relation not to his Master but to the Great White Brotherhood and to its august Head. One may find a not inapt symbol of these respective relationships in the position in which an undergraduate stands with regard to the head of his college and to the university as a whole. The university as such requires the man to pass certain examinations, and the precise methods in which he prepares himself for this, are, comparatively speaking, matters of indifference to it. It is the university, and not the head of the college, that

arranges the examination and confers the various degrees; the work of the head of the college is simply to see that the candidate is duly prepared. In the process of such preparation he may, as a private gentleman, enter into whatever social or other relations he may think proper with his pupil; but all that is not the business of the university.

Just in the same way the Great White Brotherhood has nothing to do with the relations between the Master and His pupil; that is a matter solely for the private consideration of the Master himself. Whenever the Master considers that the pupil is fit for the first initiation, He gives notice of that fact and presents him for it, and the Brotherhood asks only whether he is ready for the initiation, and not what is the relationship between him and any Master. At the same time it is true that a candidate for initiation must be proposed and seconded by two of the higher members of the Brotherhood—that is to say, by two who have reached the level of adeptship; and it is certain that the Master would not propose a man for the tests of initiation unless He had with regard to him the certainty of his

fitness, which could only come from such close identification with his consciousness as that of which I have already spoken.

When a student hears all this there naturally arises in his mind the question, "How can I become the pupil of a Master? What can I do that will attract His attention?" As a matter of fact it is quite unnecessary that we should try to attract His attention, for the Masters are ever watching for those whom They can help to be of use to Them in the great work which They have to do, and we need not have the slightest fear that we shall be overlooked.

I remember very well an incident of the early days of my own connection with the Great Ones a quarter of a century ago. I met on the physical plane a man of great enthusiasm and of the most saintly character, one who believed thoroughly in the existence of the Masters, and devoted his life to the one object of qualifying himself for Their service. He seemed to me a man in every way so entirely suitable for discipleship, so obviously better than myself in many ways, that I could not understand how it was that he was not already accepted; and so, being young in the work and ignorant, one

day when a good opportunity offered itself I very humbly and as it were apologetically mentioned his name to the Master with the suggestion that he might perhaps prove a good instrument. A smile of kindly amusement broke out upon the Master's face, as He said:

“Ah, you need not fear that your friend is being overlooked; no one can ever be overlooked; but in this case there still remains a certain karma to be worked out, which makes it impossible at the moment to accept your suggestion. Soon your friend will pass away from the physical plane, and soon he will return to it again, and then the expiation will be complete and what you desire for him will have become possible.”

And then, with the gentle kindness which is always so prominent a characteristic in Him, He blended my consciousness with His in an even more intimate manner, and raised it to a plane far higher than I could then reach, and from that elevation He showed me how the Masters look out upon the world. The whole earth lay before us with all its millions of souls, undeveloped most of them, and there-

fore inconspicuous; but wherever amidst all that mighty multitude there was one who was approaching even at a great distance the point at which definite use could be made of him, he stood out among the rest just as the flame of a light-house stands out in the darkness of the night.

“Now you see,” said the Master, “how utterly impossible it would be that any one should be overlooked who is even within measurable distance of the possibility of acceptance as a probationer.”

We can do nothing on our side but steadily work at the improvement of our own character and endeavour in every possible way, by the study of Theosophical works, by self-develöpmnt, and by the unselfishness of our devotion to the interests of others, to fit ourselves for the honour which we desire, having within our minds the utter certainty that as soon as we are ready the acceptance will assuredly come. We can do nothing but fit ourselves, and we have the certainty that as soon as we are ready we shall be accepted, because we know how great is the need of helpers. But until we can be utilised economically—until, that is to say, the force spent upon us will bring

forth, through our action, more result than it would if spent in any other way, it would be a violation of duty on the part of the Master to draw us into close relations with Him.

We may be quite sure that there are in reality no exceptions to this rule, even though we may sometimes think that we have seen some. A man may become a probationary pupil of the Master while he has still some obvious faults, but we may be very sure that in such a case there are good qualities under the surface which far more than counterbalance the superficial evils. Another thing that must be remembered is that, like the rest of us, the Great Masters of Wisdom have a long line of lives behind Them, and in those lives, like others, They have made certain kārmic ties, and so sometimes it happens that a particular individual has a claim on Them for some service rendered long ago in the remote past. In the lines of past lives which we have examined we sometimes come across instances of such a kārmic link.

One well-known case is that of a certain member who, when a powerful noble in Egypt six thousand years ago, used his

influence with the authorities of one of the great temples to introduce into it as a favoured student a young man who displayed the keenest interest in occult matters. That young student took up occultism with the greatest eagerness and made the most astonishing progress in it, so that in every life thereafter he continued the studies begun in ancient Khem. Between then and now that young student has attained adeptship, and thus passed on far in advance of the friend who then introduced him to the temple. In the work which He has had to do in these later days He needed some one to put before the world certain truths which had to be published, because the time for such unfoldment was fully ripe. He looked round for an instrument whom He could use, and He found His old friend and helper of six thousand years ago in a position in which it was possible to employ him in this work. At once He remembered His ancient debt and repaid it by giving to His friend this wonderful privilege of being the channel of the truth to the world:

Such cases indeed are fairly numerous. We all know how at a period still far earlier

one of the founders of the Theosophical Society saved the life of the other, who was at that time the eldest son of Him who is now the Master and teacher of both, and thus established a kârmic claim which has drawn those three into close relationship ever since. Again, on another occasion in the remote past our President saved the life of her present teacher when there was a conspiracy to assassinate Him; and in yet another instance one who has but just passed the portals of initiation saved the life of the Bodhisattva, the great Lord Maitreya himself.

Now all these are unquestionably kârmic links, and they constitute debts which will be fully repaid. So it may happen to any of us that in some past life we have come into touch with One who is now a Master, or done Him some slight service, and if so, that may well prove to have been the commencement of an association which will ripen into discipleship on our side. It frequently happens that people are drawn together by a strong common interest in occultism, and in later lives, when some of these have out-distanced the others, those who were once friends and

fellow-students often fall naturally into the relation of teacher and pupil.

No doubt a man may attract Their attention in many ways; he may bring himself to the portals of the Path by association with those in advance of him, by the force of sheer hard thinking, by devotion, or by earnest endeavour in good works; but all these are after all merely so many divisions of the one Way, because they all of them mean that he is making himself fit for one or other department of the work that is to be done. And so when by any of these methods he reaches a certain level, he inevitably attracts the attention of the Masters of the Wisdom and comes in some way into connection with Them, though probably not upon the physical plane. The Masters' usual plan is that he is brought into connection with one or other of Their more prominent pupils, and this is very much the safest way, since it is impossible for any ordinary person to assure himself of the good faith of astral communications.

Unless a man has had very wide experience in connection with mediumship, he would find it very difficult to realise how many quite ordinary people there are upon the astral

plane who are burning with the desire to pose as great world-teachers. They are generally quite honest in their intentions, and really think that they have teaching to give which will save the world. Now that they are dead they have fully realised the worthlessness of mere worldly objects, and they feel (quite rightly) that if they could only impress upon mankind in general the ideas which they have now acquired, the whole world would immediately become a very different place. They are also fully persuaded that they have only to publish their discoveries upon the physical plane in order at once to convince everybody of their inherent reasonableness, and so they select some impressionable lady and tell her that they have chosen her out of all the world to be the medium of a magnificent revelation.

Now it is rather flattering to the average person to be told that he or she is the sole medium in all the world for some mighty entity, the only channel for some exclusive and transcendent teaching; and even though the communicating entity should disclaim any special greatness (which he usually does not) this is put down to

praiseworthy modesty on his part, and he is described as at least an archangel, even if not a still more direct manifestation of the Deity. What such a communicating entity forgets is that when he was alive on the physical plane other people were making similar communications through various mediums, and that then he never paid the slightest attention to them, nor was in any way affected by what they said, and so he does not realise that precisely as he, when immersed in the affairs of this world, declined to be moved by those very communications, so will all the world now go on contentedly with its own business and pay no attention to *him*.

Often such entities assume distinguished names from what may almost be called a pardonable motive, for they know human nature well enough to be aware that if John Smith or Thomas Brown comes back from the dead and enunciates a certain doctrine it will have very little chance of acceptance, no matter how excellent and how entirely true it may be; whereas the same words uttered by George Washington, Julius Cæsar or the Archangel Michael would be at least respectfully considered and very probably

blindly accepted.

Any man functioning on the astral plane has a certain amount of insight into the thoughts and feelings of those with whom he is dealing, and therefore it is not wonderful that when such people come into contact with the 'Theosophists, and see their minds to be full of reverence for the Masters of Wisdom, they should sometimes personate those very Masters of Wisdom in order to command more ready acceptance for whatever ideas they wish to promulgate. Also it must not be forgotten that there are those who bear no good will to our Masters, and desire to do Them any injury which lies within their power. They cannot of course harm Them directly, and therefore they sometimes try to do so through the pupils whom They love. One of the easiest ways in which they can produce difficulties is by assuming the form of the Master who is so strongly revered by their victim, and in many cases such an imitation is quite perfect, so far as the physical appearance is concerned, except that it always seems to me that they can never quite get the right expression into the eyes. One who has developed the sight of the

higher planes cannot be thus deluded, as it is quite impossible for any of these entities to imitate the causal body of the Master.

Most assuredly we shall do well to heed diligently the wise precept in *The Voice of the Silence*, "Seek not thy Guru in those māyāvic regions." Accept no teaching from some self-appointed preceptor on the astral plane, but receive all communications and advice which come thence precisely as you would receive similar advice or remarks made by a stranger on the physical plane. Take them for what they are worth, and accept the advice or reject it as your own conscience dictates, without paying attention to its alleged source. Seek rather for teaching which satisfies the intellect, and apply the test of intellect and conscience to any claims which are put forward.

Let it never be forgotten that ours are not the only lines. The two Masters who are most intimately associated with the work of the Theosophical Society represent two different rays or methods of teaching; but there are others besides these. All schools of the higher teaching give a

preliminary training to purify the character, but the particular teachings given and practices recommended differ according to the type of the teacher. But all teachers who belong to the Great White Lodge insist upon the attainment of the highest only by means of the Path of Holiness, and the quenching of desire by conquering it and not by gratifying it.

The pupil will be employed by his Master in many different ways. Some are set to take up the lines of work indicated in the book *Invisible Helpers*; others are employed specifically in assisting the Masters personally in some piece of work which They happen to have undertaken; some are set astrally to deliver lectures to audiences of less developed souls, or to help and teach others who are free temporarily during sleep, or are permanently after death denizens of the astral world. When a pupil falls asleep at night he usually reports himself to his Master, and he is then told if there is any definite piece of work which he can do. If there happens to be nothing special he will take up his usual nocturnal work, whatever that may be. Every invisible helper acquires a number of regular cases or

patients who are put under his charge just exactly as are those of a doctor on the physical plane; and whenever there is no unusual work for him to do he simply goes on his ordinary rounds, visits these cases and does his best for them. So that he has always plenty of work of this kind to fill up his time when he is not specially needed, as for some sudden catastrophe which throws out a large number of souls simultaneously into the astral plane in a condition of terror. Most of such training in astral work as the pupil needs is usually given by one of the older pupils of the Master.

If it is necessary that the pupil should undertake any special system of psychic development on the physical plane, the Master will indicate it to him either directly or through one of His recognised pupils. What is prescribed in this way differs according to the character and needs of the pupil, and it is usually best for us to wait until we are definitely told before attempting any practices of this kind. Even when we are told of them it is best that we should keep them to ourselves, and not discuss them with others, as it is more than probable

that they would be unsuited to anyone else. Here in India among the hosts of minor teachers each man has his own methods, the difference depending partly on the different schools of philosophy to which they belong, and partly upon their different ways of looking at the same thing. But whatever their methods are, they usually keep them very secret in order to avoid the responsibility of their being wrongly used.

The harm that may be done by the indiscriminate publication of any of these half-physical systems has been very clearly exemplified in America, where a book by an Indian teacher has obtained a large circulation. This teacher guardedly mentioned certain practices, prefacing his teaching with a carefully expressed warning as to the necessity of preparation by the training of character. But nevertheless what he has written has caused a great deal of suffering, because people have uniformly disregarded his warning as to training and have recklessly tried to carry out the practices which he described. In a tour a few years ago in that country I met quite a number of people who through attempting to follow his directions had made themselves physical

wrecks. Some had become insane, some were subject to fits, and others had fallen under the spell of various obsessing entities. In order that such practices as these may be attempted with safety it is absolutely necessary that they be undertaken (as they always are undertaken in India) in the actual presence of a teacher who watches the results and at once interferes when he sees that anything is going wrong. Indeed, in this country it is usual for the pupil to remain in physical proximity to his teacher, because here people understand what I mentioned some time ago—that the first and greatest work which a teacher has to do is to attune the aura of the pupil to his own—to annul the effect of the ordinary disturbed conditions which prevail in the world, to show him how to abandon all that and to live in a world of absolute calm. One of our own Masters said in one of the earlier letters, “Come out of your world into ours,” and this of course refers not to a place but a condition of mind.

Remember that everyone who ~~meditates~~ upon the Master makes a definite link with Him, which shows itself to clairvoyant vision as a kind of line of light. The Master

always subconsciously feels the impinging of such a line, and sends out along it in response a steady stream of magnetism which continues to play long after the meditation is over. The regular practice of such meditation and concentration is of the utmost help to the aspirant, and the regularity is one of the most important factors in producing the result. It should be undertaken daily at the same hour, and we should steadily persevere with it, even though no obvious effect may be produced. When no effect appears we must be especially careful to avoid depression, because depression makes it more difficult for a Master's influence to act upon us, and it also shows that we are thinking more of ourselves than of the Master.

THE PATH OF PROGRESS

When we state the great truth that all evolution came forth from the Divine, and that we ourselves are but sparks of the divine flame and one day to be reunited to it, people often ask us two not unnatural

questions. First they say, "Why should the divine Being have sent us forth, since after all we are part of Him, and so were divine from the beginning? Why in fact did the Logos manifest Himself in matter at all, seeing that He was perfect and glorious and all-wise in the beginning? Secondly, if we emanate from the divine Spirit, why were we sent forth into wickedness, and how can man, coming forth from so pure a source, enter into such degradation as we constantly see around us?" Since these questions recur so often, it is worth while for us to consider how they may be answered.

Why the Logos manifested Himself is scarcely our business. -It is enough for us to know that He has chosen to do so, that we are part of His scheme, and that it is therefore our duty to try to understand that scheme so far as we can, and to adapt ourselves to it. But if there be any who desire to speculate upon this mystery, perhaps no better suggestion can be found for them than that which was given by the Gnostic Doctors:

"God is Love, but Love itself cannot be perfect unless it has those upon whom it can be lavished and by whom it can be returned. Therefore He put forth

of Himself into matter, and He limited His glory, in order that through this natural and slow process of evolution we might come into being; and we in turn according to His will are to develope until we reach even His own level, and then the very Love of God itself will become more perfect, because it will then be lavished on those, His own children, who will fully understand and return it, and so His great scheme will be realised and His Will will be done."

As to the further consideration why the emanation should have taken place in this particular way, that again is not our affair, for we are concerned only with the *facts* of evolution, not the reasons for it; yet there seems little difficulty in at least indicating the lines along which an answer may be found. It is quite true that man is an emanation from the substance of the Divine, but it must be remembered that the substance, when it issues forth, is undifferentiated, and from our point of view unconscious; that is, it has within it rather the potentiality of consciousness than anything to which we are in the habit of applying that term.*

In its descent into matter it is simply gathering round it the matter of the differ-

ent planes through which it passes, and it is not until, having reached the lowest point of its evolution in the mineral kingdom, it turns upwards and begins its return to the level whence it came, that it commences to develope what we call consciousness at all. It is for that reason that man began first of all to unfold his consciousness on the physical plane, and it is only after fully attaining that that he begins to be conscious upon the astral and mental planes in turn.

No doubt God might have made man perfect and obedient to the law by one act of His will, but is it not obvious that such a man would have been a mere automaton—that the will working in him would have been God's will, not his own? What the Logos desired was to call into existence, from His own substance, those who should be like unto Him in power and glory, absolutely free to choose and yet absolutely certain to choose the right and not the wrong, because in addition to perfect power they would have perfect knowledge and perfect love.

It is not easy to imagine any other way in which this result could be achieved

but that which has been adopted—the plan of leaving man free and therefore capable of making mistakes. From those mistakes he learns and gains experience, and although in such a scheme as this it is inevitable that there should be evil, and therefore sorrow and suffering, yet when the part these play as factors in man's evolution is properly understood we shall see that the Chinese proverb is true which tells us that evil is but the dark shadow of good. Most emphatically it is true that, however black the clouds may look from below, those clouds are by their very nature transient, and above and behind them all the mighty sun, which will at last dissipate them, is always shining, so that the old saying is justified that *all* things, even the most unlikely-looking, are in reality working together for good.

This much at least all who have made any real progress *know* for themselves as an absolute certainty; while they cannot hope to prove it to those who have not as yet had the experience, at least they can bear testimony to it with no uncertain voice, and that testimony is surely not without its value for souls who are still struggling

towards the light.

As to the second question, we may fairly point out that it assumes too much. It is not true to say that we are sent forth into wickedness and degradation. In fact, strictly speaking, *we* are not sent forth at all. What happens is something quite different. The Logos pours forth into manifestation the stream of force which we may describe as part of Himself or of His vesture. This stream contains in potentiality the vast hosts of monads, each of which, when fully developed, may itself become a Logos. But for such development it is necessary that it should manifest itself through matter of various grades, that the individuality should very slowly and gradually be built up, and then that certain latent qualities should be brought out. This is the process of evolution, and all the great laws of the universe are arranged to facilitate this process. In its earlier stages the manifestation of the monad is entirely controlled by these laws, not having yet developed any sort of individuality or soul of its own.

But there comes a stage in which individuality is attained, and will is beginning to be developed. The plan of the Logos is

to allow man a certain amount of freedom (at first a very small amount) in the use of this dawning will, and naturally enough by the law of averages this primitive individual uses his will about as often wrongly as rightly, although he has almost always teachers belonging to earlier evolutions, who tell him the way in which he should walk. When he uses his will wrongly (that is to say, in a direction opposed to the current of evolution) the mechanical working of nature's laws brings suffering as the result of such action. Since this happens over and over again, the primitive ego at last learns by experience that he must obey the wiser teaching given to him, and as soon as the determination to do so has become actually a part of himself a wider field of freedom of action opens before him.

In this new field in turn he is sure to act wrongly sometimes as well as rightly, so that the same process is repeated again and again, always involving suffering where mistakes have been made. Whatever of "wickedness and degradation" may exist is always the result of the action of men who have used their free-will wrongly, and are in process of learning how to use it rightly, and as soon

as that lesson shall have been universally learned all these evil effects will pass away. It is therefore obvious that whatever of evil exists in the world is entirely the doing of its inhabitants, and is in its nature temporary. However terrible and deeply rooted it may seem to us, it cannot possibly be permanent, for it is of the essence of things that it must pass away when its causes are removed. For its existence while it lasts we must blame, not the great First Cause, but ourselves, because we are failing to carry out His plan.

We often exhort people to follow the higher course rather than the lower, but I think that the truth is that a man always follows the highest about which he is really certain. The difficulty is that in so many cases the higher teaching seems vague and unreal to many people, and so although they profess to believe it, and really think that they do believe it, when it comes to the point of action they find it too vague to trust their lives to it.

For example, many people who think themselves religious are yet to be found seeking position and wealth. That attitude would be entirely reasonable if they were materialists,

and if they did not pretend to believe in anything higher; but when we find a religious man devoted to the pursuit of worldly objects there is clearly something wrong, something illogical. The fact is that he does not really believe in his religion; he is not thoroughly convinced of its truth, for if he were he could not be following after other things. He is following that about which he is really sure; he is quite certain, without the slightest mental reservation, about the desirability of money and power. He knows that he wants these things, and he thinks he knows that if he gets them they will make him happy. Therefore he devotes all his energy and time to their acquisition, and we must remember that in doing that he is at least developing will and perseverance.

Now if you can in any way manage to make him as sure of the value of the higher things as he is now about the value of pounds, shillings and pence, he will at once turn that will and that perseverance to the service of the higher development, and he will seek after realities with just the same intensity that he is now devoting to the pursuit of shadows. This is precisely

what the study of Theosophy will do for him. A man who thoroughly understands Theosophy knows that he is here for a certain purpose, and that it is most emphatically his business to devote himself entirely to the working out of that purpose. He realises thoroughly that there are things worth doing and aims worth pursuing, and he devotes himself to them with the same avidity which he previously displayed in following the acquisition of money or position.

But in order to do this it is not sufficient merely to be vaguely interested, merely to read a few books. The man must really believe it, must be thoroughly and utterly convinced of its truth. Now the only way in which this utter conviction can come to a man is by means of realising some part of it, however small, for himself and at first-hand. Without going so far as that, of course, a man may be intellectually convinced of the truth of the doctrine, and may see that nothing else is logically possible; but there are very few of us who have the strength to act upon such a logical conviction about things entirely beyond our ken; for most of us it is really

necessary that at least some small portion of the doctrine, some sample of it, as it were, should be definitely seen and known.

We who were the earlier students felt all this just as keenly as do the students of to-day, and when in those early days of twenty-five or twenty-seven years ago we asked Madame Blavatsky whether it was in any way possible that we could verify any of these things for ourselves she at once replied in the affirmative. She told us that if we chose to take the trouble to develop the requisite faculties we might unquestionably experience for ourselves the truth of a great deal of the teaching. She warned us that the way was long and arduous, and that no one could tell beforehand how long it would take for a man to tread it. But on the other hand she consoled us by saying that the end was absolutely certain, and that it was impossible that any man who started to reach it should fail to attain, though in many cases such attainment might lie, not in this life, but in some other in the future.

This was encouraging in one way, and yet somewhat daunting in another way; but at any rate a certain number of us took her at her word and threw ourselves

heart and soul into the endeavour to live the life which was prescribed for us, and to do the work that lay before us. The degrees of our success were very varied, but of all of those who made this effort and persevered with it I think I may say that there was not one who did not obtain some result—enough at any rate to show him that what he had been told was true, and that if the progress which he made was smaller than he had hoped, the fault lay clearly with himself and not with the teachers.

There were those among us, however, who succeeded in verifying for ourselves a large number of the statements made by the Masters—first of all only in a small way, with regard to ourselves, our vehicles, our possibilities, and with regard to the astral life which immediately surrounds us. Then later on by long-continued and more strenuous effort we developed the faculties of the mental body, and began for the first time really to understand what had been written for us about the life of the heaven-world. All this at first we had hopelessly misunderstood, because with the faculties then at our disposal we were actually incapable

of comprehending it. By a strenuous further effort we reached the faculties of the causal body, and then the world of comparative realities began really to open before us.

We were able then to read the records of the past, and to see from them with absolute certainty how the great scheme of the Logos is slowly unfolding itself and working itself out by means of successive births under the guidance of the great laws of evolution and cause and effect. We could see clearly then that we were unquestionably ourselves a part of this great scheme, and therefore it followed that it was alike our duty, our advantage, our privilege, to throw ourselves into the scheme and co-operate intelligently in its fulfilment. There was then no doubt for us about the fact of the great evolution and the future of humanity, for it was clear to us that we had risen through the lower kingdoms, and we could see many stages both below us and above us; all the various stages of human life arranged themselves for us as steps upon a ladder; we could see these steps stretching up and down from the point which we ourselves occupied, and there were beings upon every rung of that ladder, beings

who were clearly engaged in climbing it.

The Masters who seemed to us to stand at its summit assured us that They were men like ourselves, and that They had passed through the stage where we were now standing; between us and Them there was no break in the continuity, for every step of the ladder was occupied, and we ourselves watched the progress of some of those higher than we from one of these steps to another. When through custom the wonderful light of the higher planes grew less dazzling to us, we were able to see that even beyond the stupendous level occupied by the Masters there arose still greater heights. Above Them stood Manus, Christs, Buddhas, Lipika, great Devas, Dhyān Chohans, and many others of whom we can know nothing except that They exist, and that They, even at Their ineffable elevation, form part of the same mighty chain.

The whole of the past lies before us; we know the halting-places on the road, and the side-paths that branch off from it, and therefore we are justified in our confidence that where these great ones now stand we also shall one day stand. Seeing and understanding the inevitableness of our

destiny, we also realise that it will be quite useless to endeavour to resist it. Progress is the law marked out for us. In progress only is our happiness and our safety. As regards the progress that lies before us in this particular chain of worlds the great majority of us are by no means yet what is technically called 'safe' or 'saved.' We reach that desirable position only when we have become members of the Great Brotherhood which lasts from eternity to eternity, by passing the first of the great initiations, that of the Sotāpatti or Srota-apāṇna, the man who enters upon the stream.

To have taken that step is to have achieved the most important result, to have passed the most critical point in the whole of human evolution. For in the course of that evolution three points stand out beyond all others. The first is the entrance upon humanity, the attainment of individuality, the gaining of a causal body, the becoming a definite and apparently separate ego. To gain this individuality was the aim of the animal evolution, and its development serves a very definite purpose. The object is to make a strong individual centre, through which eventually the force of the Logos

can be poured out. When this centre is first formed it is only a baby ego, still but weak and uncertain; in order that it may become strong and definite it has to be fenced round by the intense selfishness of the savage. For many lives a strong wall of selfishness has to be maintained, in order that within it the centre may grow more and more definite.

We may regard this selfishness as a kind of scaffolding, which is absolutely necessary for the erection of the building, but must be destroyed as soon as the building is completed, in order that it may be able to subserve the purpose for which it was erected. The scaffolding is unbeautiful, and if it were left after the building is finished it would make it uninhabitable, and yet without it the building could not have been achieved. The object of the creation of the centre is that through it the force of the Logos should radiate out upon the world, and such radiation would be quite impossible if the selfishness persisted, and yet without that selfishness a strong centre could never have been made. We see therefore that this most unlovely of qualities has its place in evolution. Now for us its work is over,

and we ought to have got rid of it. But it is useless to be angry with the ordinary man for his selfishness, since it simply means that what was in the savage a necessary virtue is still persisting into the civilised condition. In point of fact the selfish man is an anachronism, a survival of prehistoric savagery. He is hopelessly behind the times.

How then is such a man to make himself unselfish, to bring himself abreast of the advancing current of evolution? The methods adopted by nature to secure this end are many and various, but they are all fundamentally one. For what is necessary is that the man shall realise the unity of all. And often he does this by gradually enlarging the self of which he thinks. Instead of thinking of himself as the unit he begins to regard the family as the unit for which he is working, and within its limits he gradually becomes unselfish. Presently he expands his ideas to include the tribe or clan to which he belongs, and he learns to be unselfish within its limits, while still absolutely selfish and even predatory to all who are outside it, whom he usually regards as natural enemies. Later on in his

history he extends his ideas so as to include, in certain respects at least, the nation to which he belongs.

It is somewhere in the course of that stage of transition that the majority of humanity stand at the present moment. In almost all minor matters the ordinary man is still fighting for his family against the interests of all other families, but in a few wider matters he recognises that his interests are identical with those of those other families, and so in those matters he develops what he calls patriotism and national feeling; but even in those matters he is still absolutely selfish as regards all those other families who happen to speak different languages and to be born in different climes. At some time in the future the average man will extend his ideas of self to include the whole of humanity, and then at last we may say that he has become by slow degrees unselfish.

While he is thus learning to take a wider view of his relation to others, he is also learning something with regard to himself. First he realises that he is not his physical body, later that he is not his feelings, and further on still that

he is not even his mind. This brings him eventually to the realisation that he is the ego or soul, and still later on he realises that even that ego is only apparently separate, and that there is in reality but one transcendent unity.

Thus the man treads the weary round of the seven hundred and seventy-seven incarnations, a time of slow and painful progress and of harrowing uncertainty, but at last after all those struggles the uncertainty ends with that plunge into the stream that makes the man safe for ever, and so that is the second and still more important point in his evolution. But before he can take this step the man must have learned consciously to co-operate with nature, he must definitely have taken his own evolution in hand. The knowledge of the unity which makes him unselfish also makes him desire to be useful, for it gives him an incentive to study and to perfect himself—a reason for his actions and a criterion by which he can judge the feelings and thoughts within him, and also the value of all with which he comes into contact.

How then must he begin this work of perfecting himself? Obviously he must first

pull up the weeds, that is to say he must eliminate one by one the undesirable qualities which he finds in himself; then he must seek the good qualities and cultivate them. He must definitely set himself to practise helpfulness, even although at first he may be very clumsy in the unaccustomed work. The formation of character is very slow and tedious for him, for there are many forces arrayed against his efforts, forces which he himself has made in the past. He has for many years been yielding himself to the sway of certain undesirable qualities, and so they have gained a great momentum.

Take the case of such a vice as irritability, for example. He has in the past been in the habit of yielding himself to outbursts of anger, and every such outburst makes it more difficult for him to control himself on the next occasion; so a strong habit has been set up, a vast amount of energy moving in that direction has been accumulated. This is stored up, not in the ego as an inherent quality, but in the permanent astral atom; and when he realises the inadvisability of anger and sets himself against it he has to meet this store of force which he himself has generated

during many past lives. Naturally he finds his task a difficult one, and he meets with many failures and discouragements; but the important thing for him to bear in mind is that however many times he may fail, victory is absolutely a scientific certainty, if only he will persevere.

However great the amount of force may be which he has stored up, it must be a finite amount, and every effort which he makes against it reduces it by just so much. But on his side there is a force which is infinite; if only his will is strong enough he can go on, if necessary through many lives, steadily renewing the force for good with which he combats the evil, and behind him in that effort is the infinite force of the Logos Himself, because that evolution is in accordance with His will. Until the man grasps the idea of unity he has no adequate motive for undertaking the hard and distasteful work of character-building, but when he has seen the necessity of this, the reason for trying is just as valid even though he has failed a thousand times as it was in the beginning. No number of failures can daunt the man who understands the scheme, just because

he knows that however great the struggle may be the forces of infinity are on his side, and therefore in the end he cannot fail.

To be certain of remembering this purpose of his from life to life he should raise his consciousness to the ego; but during the stages when he is as yet incapable of this he will nevertheless impress that purpose upon the permanent atoms, and so it will be carried over with them from life to life. If the ego can be reached, the man will be born with the knowledge inherent in him; if he can only impress the permanent atoms, the knowledge will not actually be born with him as part of his stock-in-trade, but the moment that it comes before him in any form in his next incarnation he will immediately recognise its truth, seize upon it, and act accordingly. This steady practice of virtue and this persistent increase of knowledge will certainly lead him to the gate of the probationary path, and through that to the great initiation of which we have spoken.

After that initiation the third point is sure to follow—the gaining of the further shore of that stream, in the attainment of adeptship, when the man leaves the merely human

evolution and enters upon that which is superhuman. We are told that after a man has entered upon the stream it takes him an average of seven incarnations to reach the fourth step, that of the arhat, the noble, the venerable, the perfect. That period is more often lengthened than shortened, and the lives are usually taken without an intervening stage in the heaven-world. Ordinarily it is only men of this stage who are able thus to dispense with or renounce the life of the heaven-world.

At the same time those who are so happy as to be chosen to take part in the noble task for which the great Masters are preparing us, that of working under the Manu in charge of the development of the sixth root-race, will certainly need many successive incarnations without any intervening periods of celestial rest. The possibility of this is however conditioned by the rule that a man must have experienced celestial consciousness before he can renounce the heaven-life; and furthermore it is not in the least merely a question of voluntarily renouncing a reward, but of being sufficiently advanced to dispense for a time with that part of evolution which for

the majority comes most usually in the heaven-life.

When he stands upon the step of arhatship half his path from the first initiation to adeptship may be said to have been trodden, for he has then cast off five of the ten great fetters which hold men back from nirvāna. Before him lies the task of casting off the remaining five, and for that also an average of seven incarnations is allowed, but it must be understood that this average is in no sense a rule, for many men take much longer than this, whereas others with greater determination and perseverance move through these initiations in very much less time. A case has been known in which, by beginning very early in life, and by working very hard, a man has been able to take all four of the great initiations in one incarnation, but this is excessively rare, and not one in ten thousand candidates could do it.

It will be remembered that to stand at the level of the arhat involves the power fully to use the buddhic vehicle, and it will also be remembered that when a man raises himself into his buddhic body the causal body vanishes, and he is under

no compulsion whatever ever to re-form it. Clearly therefore the seven lives which remain to him before he reaches the level of adeptship need not involve a descent to the physical plane at all, and therefore they may not be what we ordinarily mean by incarnations. Nevertheless in the great majority of cases they are taken upon the physical plane, because the man has work to do upon that plane for the Great Brotherhood.

The candidate spends these fourteen lives in passing through the different stages of the Path of Holiness, and in acquiring all the qualifications which are described in detail in the concluding chapters of *Invisible Helpers*. One who becomes a disciple of one of our Masters takes always, not the path to selfish liberation—the mere balancing of good and evil karma and the vanquishing of all desire, so that the man is no longer forced back into rebirth—but the path of renunciation in which, having seen the scheme of the Logos, the man throws himself into it and lives only to promote the advancement of his fellow-men.

This has been called “The Path of Woe” because of the constant self-sacrifice which it involves, but in truth this title is somewhat

of a misnomer, because although it is true that there is suffering, it is always a suffering of the lower and not of the higher, and if the man should avoid such suffering by supineness or idleness, and leave undone the work which he might have done, there would assuredly be much greater suffering for him at a far higher level, in the shape of remorse. Such suffering as is inevitable in this path arises from the fact that the student is striving to do here and now in the fourth round what will be natural and easy in the seventh round. All our vehicles then will be much more developed, and even the very material of which they are built will be in an entirely different condition, because the physical atom will then have all its seven spirillæ active instead of only four of them. Therefore to force our present undeveloped vehicles to do work which will be comparatively easy for those which in millions of years will be fully developed, involves a great deal of strain, and this strain is necessarily productive of a certain amount of suffering.

It is analogous to the suffering and privation which is cheerfully undergone by an athlete when he puts himself in train-

ing. If he wishes to compete in some great race or trial of strength, he must make his physical body do more than it would naturally do, and deny it many things which it greatly likes, the absence of which unquestionably causes it considerable discomfort, and perhaps even somewhat of positive suffering. Yet for the purpose which he has in view the athlete quite cheerfully undergoes this; indeed if, for the sake of avoiding these comparatively slight temporary discomforts, he should put aside the opportunity of taking part in the race or contest, it is quite likely that afterwards when he saw his comrades passing onward to victory he would feel a remorse for that self-indulgence, which would involve keener suffering on a higher plane. The analogy holds good in reference to the efforts necessary to progress along the path of renunciation; the man who fell aside from that path because of its difficulties and hardships would undoubtedly suffer far more in the long run from remorse when he saw those of his fellow-creatures going unhelped whom he might have aided, when he saw misery among them which he knew that he might have relieved if he had been less self-indulgent.

There is never any pain to the Self, but only to these lower vehicles, when they are being prematurely adapted. A good analogy may be taken from the growth of crabs and other crustaceans. These creatures have their bones outside for protection, in the form of a shell, while our bones are inside, in the form of a skeleton. A fatal objection to the crustacean scheme is that when the creature grows it has to burst the shell and then wait for another one to grow, which must be both a painful and inconvenient process. So in the process of our growth do we make about ourselves shells of thought, as though we were mental crustaceans. Presently the shell becomes too small, and then we make a long series of efforts to crowd the new growth inside it and make it do somehow; but in the end this always proves impossible, and we have painfully to burst it. This however is inevitable, so chafe not at karma and at nature's changeless laws, for you made the shell yourself in the past, and now you yourself must break it. But if you did not go to the inconvenience of breaking it, you would suffer far more in the unsatisfied feeling that no progress had been made.

Many people are afraid of change, especially of a change of faith, and this arises not only from inherited prejudice, but also from actual fear of doubt—fear that if one once lets go one may be unable to find mental anchorage anywhere. Many a man is quite unable to make a rational defence of his belief, or to answer the problems which inevitably arise in connection with it, and yet he is afraid to let it go. Sooner or later he will have to let go, though the widening out of his faith is sure to be accompanied by pain. Truly there would be no suffering for us if we never broke our shells, but then on the other hand there would be no progress.

The life of the disciple is full of joy—never doubt it for an instant. But it is not a life of ease. The work which he has to do is very hard, the struggle is a very real one. To compress into a few short lives the evolution of millions of years—the evolution for which the ordinary process of nature allows three rounds and a half—is not a mere holiday task. Our President has written: “Disciples are the crucibles of nature, wherein compounds that are mischievous are dissociated and

are recombined into compounds that promote the general good."

It is not *necessary* for any one to become such a crucible; perhaps it would be nearer the fact to say that to become one is a distinction eagerly sought after; nearer still to say that when once a man has *seen* the great sacrifice of the Logos there is no other possibility for him but to throw himself into it—to do his tiny best to share in it and to help it at whatever cost to his lower nature. And this is no child's play; it does indeed involve often a terrible strain. But an earnest student will be able to realise that a man may so love his work, and may be so full of joy in it, that outside of it there can be no pleasure worth considering, even though that work may tax almost beyond bearing every faculty and every vehicle—physical, astral or mental—which he possesses.

It must be remembered that when humanity in general has this work to do and this evolution to accomplish, it will be far better fitted for the effort than is the man who is trying now to take a shorter and steeper road. Many of his difficulties are due to the fact that he is attempting with a set of fourth-round bodies to achieve

the result for the attainment of which nature will prepare her less adventurous children by supplying them in the course of the ages with the splendid vehicles of the seventh round. Of course even to gain those glorified vehicles these weaker souls will have to do the same work; but when it is spread over thousands of incarnations it naturally looks less formidable.

Yet beyond and above all his struggle the pupil has ever an abiding joy, a peace and serenity that nothing on earth can disturb. If he had not, he would indeed be a faithless servant of his Master, for he would be allowing the temporary strain on the vehicles to overbear his perception of the Self within; he would be identifying himself with the lower instead of with the higher.

There is therefore a certain element of the ridiculous in describing this Path as one of woe, when it is clearly evident that there would be much greater woe for the candidate if this Path were not taken. Indeed, to the man who is really doing his duty true sorrow is unknown: "Never doth any who worketh righteousness, O beloved, tread the path of woe." (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, vi. 40.)

This is as regards the inner life of the

disciple, but if one is to consider the treatment which he is likely to receive on the physical plane, the name of the path of woe is by no means inappropriate, at least if he has to do any sort of public work in which he tries to help the world. Ruysbroek, the Flemish mystic of the fourteenth century, writes of those who enter upon the Path: "Sometimes these unhappy ones are deprived of the good things of earth, of their friends and relations, and are deserted by all creatures; their holiness is mistrusted and despised, men put a bad construction on all the works of their life, and they are rejected and disdained by all those who surround them; and sometimes they are afflicted with divers diseases." Remember, too, how Madame Blavatsky writes: "Where do we find in history that 'Messenger' grand or humble, an Initiate or Neophyte, who, when he was made the bearer of some hitherto concealed truth or truths, was not crucified and rent to shreds by the 'dogs' of envy, malice and ignorance? Such is the terrible Occult law; and he who does not feel in himself the heart of a lion to scorn the savage barking, and the soul of a dove to forgive the poor

ignorant fools, let him give up the Sacred Science.” (*The Secret Doctrine*, iii. 90.)

The way in which the world usually treats a new truth is first to ridicule it, then to grow angry about it, and then to adopt it and pretend that it has always held that view. In the meantime the first exponent of the new truth has probably been put to death or died of a broken heart.

It is in the course of the training on this Path that the consciousness of the candidate passes through the three halls mentioned in *The Voice of the Silence*. This term is used there to indicate the three lower planes. The first, that of ignorance, is the physical plane, upon which we are born and live and die, and it is very truly described as a Hall of Ignorance, for all that we know in it is the merest outside of things. The second, the Hall of Learning, is the astral plane, which is very truly the place of probationary learning, for when the astral centres are opened we see so much more of everything than we do on the physical plane that at first it seems to us that we must indeed be seeing the whole, though further development soon shows us that this is not so.

But *The Voice of the Silence* warns us that beneath each flower in this region, however beautiful it may be, lies coiled the serpent of desire—that lower desire which the aspirant must stifle in order that he may develop in its place the higher desire which we call aspiration. In the case of affection, for example, the lower, the selfish, the grasping affection must be altogether transcended, but the high, pure, and unselfish affection can never be transcended, since that is a characteristic of the Logos Himself, and a necessary qualification for progress upon the Path. What men should cast aside is such love as thinks always “How much love can I gain? how much does so and so love me? does he love me as he loves some one else?” The love which we need is that which forgets itself altogether, and seeks only the occasion to pour itself out at the feet of the loved one.

The astral plane is often called the world of illusion, yet it is at least one stage, and a very long stage, nearer to the truth of things than what we see on the physical plane. It often happens that men are easily deluded upon the astral plane, because they are as yet much in the position of

babies there, new-born infants with no sense of distance and no developed capacity for locomotion. We must not forget that in the normal course of things people very slowly awaken to the realities of the astral plane, just as a baby awakens to the realities of the physical plane. But those of us who are deliberately and, as it were, prematurely entering upon the Path are developing such knowledge abnormally, and are consequently more liable to error.

Danger and injury might easily come in the course of our experiments but for the fact that all pupils who under proper training are endeavouring to open these faculties are assisted and guided by those who are already accustomed to the plane. That is the reason for the various tests which are always applied to one who wishes to become a worker on the higher planes; that is why also all sorts of horrible sights are shown to the neophyte, in order that he may understand them and become accustomed to them. If this were not done, and if he came across such a thing suddenly, he might receive a shock which would drive him back into his physical body, and this would not only prevent his doing any useful work, but might also

be a positive danger to that body. Where the neophyte is deluded on the astral plane it is his own fault, and not that of the plane, because error is due only to his unfamiliarity with the surroundings.

The third hall is the mental plane—the Hall of Wisdom. As soon as the man is free from attachment to astral things he can pass beyond the probationary stage of his learning, and begin to acquire knowledge which is real and definite. Beyond that in turn lies the imperishable world of the buddhic plane, in which for the first time the man learns the true unity of all that to the lower vision seems to be separate.

It has been said, “Thou canst not travel on the Path before thou hast become that Path itself.” As long as it is but a Path to us, and we are following it according to directions received, or because we have seen it and chosen it with the intellect only, we have not truly entered it at all. This is only a stage, leading on to the condition when you have become yourself the Law and the Path, and you fulfil its requirements, instinctively doing the right merely because it is the right, and because it is inconceivable that you could do anything

else. Then only you have *become* the Path.

A man cannot climb if he does not try; though if he does not climb it is true that he will not fall far. The strong man often makes serious errors; but the very force which enables him to make them also enables him to make great progress when he turns his energies in the right direction. Rapid progress affects the whole organism and is a great strain upon it, and this inevitably finds out whatever weak spots there are in the man. The plans of the Hierarchy will be carried out whatever we may or may not do, for we are but as pawns in the mighty game which is being played; but if we are intelligent pawns, and are willing to co-operate, it gives much less trouble to the authorities, and incidentally to ourselves.

And what will be the end of it all? The attainment of perfection. Yet even that is only relatively and not absolutely the end, for when we have reached in fullest consciousness the Logos of our system, and have unified our consciousness with His, there still remains the further Path which leads us to union with still higher Powers. A great authority has told us that at the end of one

of the stages of evolution far beyond adeptship the perfect man will be a decad, having a body upon each of the sub-planes of the lowest cosmic plane, the triple Logos outside of time and space constituting his Self, and thus completing the ten. But this consummation can only be reached when the man has power to create a body for himself upon each of these planes.

We have been led to understand that of the total number of egos which are engaged in this evolution about one-fifth will fully succeed—that is to say will succeed in attaining the asekha level before the end of the seventh round. Another fifth will, by that time, have gained the arhat level, and about an equal number will be on the lower stages of the Path, while a number roughly stated as the remaining two-fifths will have dropped out of this evolution altogether at the critical period at the middle of the fifth round.

All those who have not fully attained the goal, and completed their evolution, will have to resume it upon the next chain of globes, and even those who are the failures of the fifth round will be successes in the next chain. In the same way it is

not improbable that some of those who are adepts and Masters now may have been among the failures of the moon-chain—that is to say, that They belonged to the humanity of that chain, but were somewhat backward upon it, and so dropped out there, and came on in the fore-front of this later evolution, exactly as a boy who failed to pass an examination one year would be likely to be among the first of his class when he tries the same examination again twelve months later.

Remember that we are now only just past the middle of an evolutionary period, and that is why so very few people comparatively have as yet attained adeptship, just as very few boys in a class would be already fit to pass the final examination of the year after only six months of study. In precisely the same way very few animals are as yet attaining individuality, for the animal who attains individuality is as far in advance of his fellows as is the human being who attains adeptship in advance of the average man. Both are doing at the middle point of evolution what they are expected to be able to do only at the end of it. Those who achieve only at the

normal time, at the end of the seventh round, will approach their goal so gradually that there will be little or no struggle.

Undoubtedly to attain in that way is very far easier for the candidate. But that method has the tremendous drawback that the man who attains by it will not have been able to give any help to others, but will on the contrary have required assistance himself. I remember from the days of my childhood a Christian hymn which gave this idea very beautifully. It described how a certain soul went to heaven and enjoyed its bliss, and wandered about there very happily for a time, but at last he noticed that the crown which he wore differed much in splendour from many of the others, and for a long time he wondered why this was so. At last he met the Christ Himself and mustered up courage to ask Him the reason of this peculiarity; and the answer given ran thus:

I know thou hast believed on Me,
And Life through Me is thine;
But where are all those glorious gems
That in thy crown should shine?
Thou seest yonder glorious throng
With stars on every brow,
For every soul they led to Me
They wear a jewel now.

“They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, but they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.”

When we are struggling onwards ourselves we can help others, and we should do all that we can in this direction, not because of the result to ourselves (though that is inevitable) but for the sake of helping the world. The man who drifts with the stream has to be carried along, but when he begins to swim himself he sets free the force that would otherwise have been spent in helping him. That can then be used for the helping of others, quite independently of what he himself may do in that line.

Adeptship sets the man free from the necessity of rebirth, and its achievement also involves the liberation of forces for the aid of others. The man who seeks liberation only for himself may balance his karma perfectly and may kill out desire, so that the law of karma will no longer compel him to rebirth. But though he thus avoids the action of the law of karma he does not escape from the law of evolution. It may be long before he comes under the influence of that law, because by the

hypothesis a man who has already at this stage set himself free from all desire must be considerably in advance of the average. There will however inevitably come a time when the slow and steady advance of the law of evolution will overtake him, and then its resistless pressure will force him out of his selfish bliss into rebirth once more, and so he will find himself again upon the wheel from which he had hoped to escape.

It has often been asked how the secrets revealed at initiation are protected from those who are able to read thoughts. There is not the slightest danger that any of these secrets will ever be disclosed in this manner, for at the same time that the secret is told to the initiate the means by which he can guard it is also explained to him. If it could be possible that an initiate could ever be so false as to think of betraying what has been confided to him, even then there would be no danger, for he is in such close touch with the Brotherhood of which he is a part that they would at once know of his foul intention, and before he could speak the treacherous words he would have forgotten utterly that there was anything to betray. There is

nothing that is in any way terrible about these secrets, except that the power which goes with them might well be terrible if wrongly used. Initiates always know one another, much in the same way as free-masons do ; and, just as with the latter, any initiate could hide his status from those below him, but not from those above him.

However sorely the Brotherhood may be in need of helpers no man can receive initiation until his character is developed to a stage when he is ready for it, and in exactly the same way if a man has raised himself to the level of initiation there is no power which can withhold it from him. It may very often happen, however, that a man is ready in every respect, save for a lack of some one quality ; and that lack may hold him back for a very long time, which would probably mean that by the time he acquired the missing quality he would in all other respects be developed in advance of the requirements. So it must not be supposed that all initiates standing upon the same level are invariably equal in all respects. What the world calls a great man is not necessarily developed all round and fit for initiation. Anything in the nature of favour-

itism or neglect is utterly inconceivable. In this matter no man can give to another that which he has not earned, nor can any man withhold the due recognition of development won.

THE ANCIENT MYSTERIES

What I can tell you with regard to the ancient mysteries is not derived from any special study of old manuscripts, or of the history of this subject. It happened to me in another life to be born in ancient Greece, and to become initiated there into some of the mysteries. Now a man who was initiated in this way in Greece gave a pledge not to reveal what he had seen, and this pledge is binding, even though it was given in a former incarnation; but Those who stood behind those mysteries have since thought fit to give out to the world much of what was then taught only under the vow of secrecy, and so They have relieved us from our promise as far as those teachings go. Therefore I break no pledge when I tell you something about the instructions which were given in those ancient

mysteries. Other subjects were taught, however, which I am not at liberty to name, because they have not yet been made public by the Great Ones.

In the first place, I should like to ask you to notice that all peoples and all religions have had their mysteries, including the Christian religion. I have often heard people say that in the Christian religion, at least, nothing **was** hidden: that everything was open for the study of the poor and the unlearned. Any one who says that does not know the history of the Christian Church. Now, indeed, everything the Church knows is given out, but that is only because it has forgotten the mysteries which it used to keep hidden. If you study the earliest history of the Church, you will find that old writers speak very distinctly of the mysteries, which were taught only to those who were full members of the Church. There were many points on which nothing was said to those who were only "katechoumenoi," who had just entered the Church, but were still candidates for full membership.

Traces of this we can find still earlier, for you will remember that it is said in the Gospels that the Christ made known to

His disciples many things which He gave to the multitude only in parables.

But one of the reasons of the failure of the Christian Church to control her more intellectual sons, as she should have done, is the fact that she has forgotten and lost the supernatural and philosophical mysteries which were the basis of her dogma. To see something of this hidden side of her teachings you have only to read the works of the great Gnostic writers. Then you will find that when we take this side as the inner doctrine for the scholars, and the present form of the Christian religion as the outer doctrine for the illiterate, we get in the two combined a perfect expression of the ancient Wisdom. But to take either of these teachings by itself, and to condemn the other as heresy, gives us only a one-sided view. So every religion has instruction for those who do not get beyond its outer form, but has always also higher instruction for those who penetrate to the inner.

However, when we speak of the ancient mysteries, we generally mean those which were connected with the great religion of ancient Greece. Only a few books exist on

this subject. There is a book of Iamblichus, who was himself initiated into the mysteries, and there is a book written by a countryman of mine, Thomas Taylor, a Platonist, and also one by a Frenchman, Monsieur P. Foucart. Although they are very interesting, you will find that they give but little real information. Much that we think we know about the mysteries (I mean from an external point of view) comes to us through the writings of their opponents.

The Christian Church has had the habit—probably justifiable from her own point of view—of destroying all books which stood for teachings other than her own, and we must not forget that almost all our knowledge with regard to early Christian times comes to us through the hands of the monks of the middle ages. They were practically the only educated people of that time, and it was they who copied all the manuscripts. They had very pronounced opinions about what was useful and what was not; so very naturally only that part survived which agreed with their views, this being reported with emphasis, while anything of opposite character was discarded. Above all, the greater part of the know-

ledge which is accessible to the general world about the mysteries is found in the works of the Church Fathers, who were opposed to them. Without wishing to accuse the Fathers of having purposely misrepresented, we may certainly conclude that they tried to put forward their own view in the best and strongest light. Even at the present day if you wished to know the whole truth concerning the doctrine of some Protestant sect, you would not go to Catholic priests for information; nor, if you wanted good and just explanations concerning Catholicism, would you go to the Salvation Army to get them.

In regard to the mysteries we are in a similar situation, only much worse, because of the many and bitter disputes between the followers of the old religion and its mysteries and the Fathers of the Christian Church. Therefore we may accept only with considerable reserve and with great prudence what the Fathers say in regard to this subject. For example, you will find that they often maintain that the ancient mysteries contain much that is indecent and immoral.

Because I have carefully searched clair-

voyantly through the mysteries of Greece, and in a former incarnation was myself an initiate of them, I can say with perfect certainty that there is not even a shadow of truth in those statements. There did exist certain mysteries with which were connected festivities and a form of Bacchus-worship, which degenerated later on into something very objectionable; but this was only in later times, and those mysteries belonged to quite another branch. They were not in the least related to the mysteries of Eleusis, but were only an imitation of them on a very small scale, entirely exoteric.

I have, this evening, to treat a very extensive subject in a short time. I must try to give you a rough sketch of what those Greek mysteries were and what was taught to the initiates.

The fact will be known to you that two divisions are always mentioned: the lesser and the greater mysteries. Everybody knew that those existed, and the number of persons who were initiated was indeed quite a large proportion of the whole population. I think you may read in exoteric books of thirty thousand initiates gathering at one time, and this also shows that the

fact that a man was initiated need not be kept secret, but that the outer world knew him as belonging to this numerous class. I mean that, although certain teachings given in the mysteries were always kept secret, the whole Greek and Roman world knew that the greater and lesser mysteries existed, and more or less who belonged to each of them.

But behind those two degrees, the existence of which was generally known, there were all the time the real secret mysteries; and the existence of this third degree, as one might call it, was unknown to the public. If one thinks of the conditions of that time one can readily understand the reason for this. Most of the Roman Emperors, for example, knew of the existence of the lesser and greater mysteries, and insisted upon being initiated. Now we know very well from history that many of the Roman Emperors were hardly of the character to be allowed to play a leading rôle in a religious body. But, all the same, it would have been very difficult for the leaders of the mysteries to refuse entrance to an Emperor of Rome. As was once said, one cannot argue with the master of thirty

legions. The Emperors would certainly have killed any one who stood in the way of anything which they wished. Thus it was desirable that the existence of the third degree should not be known, and nobody knew that there was such a degree before he was deemed, by those who could judge, worthy to be admitted to it.

The teachings of this third degree were never given to the public, and never will be. But in the common mysteries, lesser and greater, are many things which can be told. In the first place, then, we were taught certain pithy sayings, or apophthegms, and if I quote you some of those you will understand the nature of the teaching. One of the best known was "Death is life, and life is death." This shows us that the higher life on the other side of death was well known. Another saying was "He who seeks realities in this life shall also seek realities after death, and he who seeks unrealities in this life shall also seek unrealities after death." A great principle of their teaching was that the soul had descended from the higher spheres to the material. The principles of reincarnation were also contained in their instruction.

You will remember that this did not appear in the external doctrine of the religions either of Greece or of Rome—that is to say, it was not taught publicly and in so many words—but you will find that this idea of the descent of the soul into matter is imparted in classic mythology. You will remember the myth of Proserpina, who was carried to the under-world while picking the flower of the narcissus.

Let us recall the myth of Narcissus. He was a youth of great beauty who fell in love with his own image reflected in the water, and was therefore changed into a flower and bound to earth. You need not have studied much Theosophy to see what that means. We learn in *The Secret Doctrine* how the ego looks down upon the waters of the astral plane and the lower world, how it reflects itself in the personality, how it identifies itself with the personality and, falling in love with its image, is bound to earth. So Proserpina, while picking the narcissus, is dragged away to the under-world, and afterwards passes half her life under the earth and half on the earth; that is, as you will see, half in a material body and half out of it.

In the same way, there are numbers of other myths of which it is very interesting to hear the Theosophical explanation. For example, in this old mystery-teaching the minotaur was held to signify the lower nature in man—the personality which is half man and half animal. This was eventually slain by Theseus, who typifies the higher self or the individuality, which has been gradually growing and gathering strength until at last it can wield the sword of its Divine Father, the Spirit. Guided through the labyrinth of illusion which constitutes these lower planes by the thread of occult knowledge given him by Ariadne (who represents intuition) the higher self is enabled to slay the lower, and to escape safely from the web of illusion; yet there still remains for him the danger that, developing intellectual pride, he may neglect intuition, even as Theseus neglected Ariadne, and so fail for this time to realise his highest possibilities.

In ancient Greece the lesser mysteries were especially celebrated in a little place called Agrae, and the initiates were called “mystae.” Perhaps you know that their official dress, the token of their dignity, was the skin of a fawn, which in the old symbology

represented the astral body.

Its spotted appearance ~~was~~ thought to be emblematic of the many colours in an ordinary astral body. The reason why this was considered a fitting dress for those initiated into the lesser mysteries was because the principal teachings given in them concerned the astral plane. They who were admitted learnt what the astral life of man would be after death.

Much time was spent in making clear by example as well as by teaching what would be the effect in the astral world of a certain mode of life on earth. In the first place they taught by illustrations, on an extensive scale by representations in the temples, by a kind of play or drama in which was shown what, in the astral world, would be the condition of a man who had been, let us say, avaricious or full of sensual desires. In the old days of the mysteries, when the leaders were adepts or pupils of adepts, these representations were something like materialisations. That is to say, the teacher, whoever he was, produced them by his own power out of astral or etheric matter, and created a real image for his pupils. But as time advanced, and later teachers were

unable to bring about this phenomenon, they tried to represent these teachings in other ways—in some cases by what we should call acting. Members of the priesthood took the rôles of different persons, while in other cases puppets were moved by machinery.

In addition to the teaching concerning the astral plane, instructions were also given in the same way as to the system of world-evolution. Among other things, pupils were taught how our solar system and its different parts came into existence. You can easily see how that could be represented, first by materialised nebulæ and globes, and how, when this materialisation was no longer possible, the arrangement of different globes could be made clear by the use of what we now call an orrery—that is, a model of the solar system.

One of the most important things connected with the mysteries was that they explained the outer religion of the people in quite another way than that given to the general public. If you know anything about the religion of ancient Greece, you will understand that there were many things which badly needed some inner explanation, for certainly their religion does

not appear to be very elevated or very reasonable when looked at from the ordinary standpoint. It seems to have been the object that all the stories which made up the outer teaching, many of which seem very extraordinary, should be learnt by the people and retained in their minds—just a few simple, clear conceptions, and nothing more. But all earnest-minded people joined the mysteries, and learnt there the real meaning of the stories, which gave the whole thing quite another aspect.

Let me give you an idea of what I mean, by two or three very simple and short examples. I told you that, for the most part, the aim of those lesser mysteries was to inform the pupils about the effects on the astral plane of a certain mode of life here on earth. You probably know the myth of Tantalus. He was a man condemned to suffer in hell eternal thirst, while water surrounded him on all sides, but receded from his lips as soon as he tried to drink. The meaning of this is not difficult to see, when once we know what the astral life is. Everyone who leaves this world of ours full of sensual desires of any kind—as, for example, a drunkard, or some one who has

given himself up to sensual living in the ordinary meaning of the word—such a man finds himself on the astral plane in the position of Tantalus.

He has built up for himself this terrible desire which governs his whole being. You know how powerful the desire can be in the case of a drunkard; it conquers his feelings of honour, his love to his family, and all the better inclinations of his character. He will take money from his wife and children, will even take their clothes to sell them and obtain money to drink.

Remember that when a man dies he does not change at all. His desire is still as powerful as ever. But it is impossible to gratify it, because his physical body, through which only he could drink, is gone. There you have your Tantalus, as you see, full of that terrible desire, always trying to gratify it, but always finding that the gratification recedes as soon as he thinks he has it.

Recall also the story of Tityus, the man who was tied to a rock, his liver being gnawed by vultures, and growing again as fast as it was eaten. There you have an illustration of the effect of yielding to

desire : an image of the man who is always tortured by remorse for sins committed on earth.

As perhaps a higher example of the same we can take the story of Sisyphus. You know how he was condemned always to roll a stone up a hill, and how, when he reached the top, the stone would always roll down again. That is the condition of an ambitious man after death, a man who has spent his life in making plans for selfish ends, for attaining glory or honour. In his case also death brings no change. He goes on making plans just as he did during life. He works out his plans, he executes them, as he thinks, till the point of culmination, and then he suddenly perceives that he has no longer a physical body, and that all was but a dream. Then he begins again and again, till he has learnt at last that these desires are useless and that ambition must be killed. So Sisyphus goes on uselessly rolling the stone up the hill, till at last he learns not to roll it any more. To have learnt that is to have conquered that desire, and he will come back in his next life without it; without the *desire*, but of course not without the

weakness of character which made that desire possible.

So you see that conditions that seem terrible are but the effects in the other world of a wrong life here on earth. That is nature's method of turning wrong into good. Man does suffer, but what he suffers is only the effect of his own action and nothing else; it is not punishment inflicted upon him from outside, but entirely of his own making. And that is not all. The suffering he has to bear is the only means by which his qualities can be directed in the right way for his evolution and progress in another life. This was a point much emphasised in the teaching of the mysteries.

Now in regard to the greater mysteries. Those were celebrated principally in the great temple of Eleusis, not far from Athens. The initiates were named "epoptai," that is, "they whose eyes are opened." Their emblem was the golden fleece of Jason, which is the symbol of the mind-body; for the yellow colour in the human aura indicates the intelligence, as every clairvoyant knows. In this degree of initiation the teachings of the former degree were continued. In the first, as you remember, were taught

the effects in the astral world of various ways of living. In the greater mysteries the pupil was shown what would be the effect in the heaven-world of a certain line of life, study and aspiration on earth. The whole history of the evolution of the world and of man, in its deeper aspect, was expounded in the greater mysteries. The same method of representation as in the other case was used here; although it was much more difficult to represent on the physical plane what belonged to the mental.

In each of these divisions of the mysteries, the lesser and the greater, there was an inner school which taught practical development to those who were seen to be ready for it. In the lesser mysteries theoretical knowledge about the astral plane was given, but the teachers carefully watched their pupils, and when they noticed one of whose character they felt sure, who showed that he was capable of psychic development, they invited him into the inner circle in which instruction was given as to the method of using the astral body and consciously functioning in it. When such a man passed on to the

greater mysteries he received not only the ordinary teaching about the conditions of the mental plane, but also private instruction as to the development of the mental body as a vehicle.

Those who were thus received, not only into the recognised stages of the mysteries but into their inner schools, were also taught at the end of their course that all of this was in truth but exoteric—that all which they had learnt, incalculable as had been its value, was really only a preparation for the true mysteries of initiation which would lead them to the feet of the Masters of Wisdom, and admit them to the Great Brotherhood which rules the world.

I may explain still further the meaning of some of those symbols which were used in connection with the mysteries. First, we will take what was called the thyrsus—that is, a staff with a pine-cone on its top. In India the same symbol is found, but instead of the staff a stick of bamboo with seven knots is used. In some modifications of the mysteries, a hollow iron rod, said to contain fire, was used instead of the thyrsus. Here again it is not

difficult for the student of occultism to see the meaning. The staff or the stick with seven knots represents the spinal cord, with its seven centres, of which we read in the Hindū books. The hidden fire is the serpent-fire, kundalinī, of which you may read in *The Secret Doctrine*. But the thyrsus was not only a symbol; it was also an object of practical use. It was a very strong magnetic instrument, used by initiates to free the astral body from the physical when they passed in full consciousness to this higher life. The priest who had magnetised it laid it against the spinal cord of the candidate and gave him in that way some of his own magnetism, to help him in that difficult life and in the efforts which lay before him. In connection with these mysteries, a certain set of objects called the toys of Bacchus are spoken of. When you go over those lists of the toys of Bacchus you will find them very remarkable.

Whilst the child Bacchus (the Logos) plays with his toys he is seized by the Titans and torn to pieces. Later these pieces are put together and built into a whole. You will understand that this,

however clumsy it may seem to us, is without doubt an allegory, which represents the descending of the One to become the many, and the re-union of the many in the One, through suffering and sacrifice. What, then, are the toys of the child Bacchus when he falls into matter and becomes the many? In the first place we find him playing with dice. Those dice are not common dice, but the five platonic solids; a set of five regular figures, the only regular polygons possible in geometry. They are given in a fixed series, and this series agrees with the different planes of the solar system. Each of them indicates, not the form of the atoms of the different planes, but the lines along which the power works which surrounds those atoms. These polygons are the tetrahedron, the cube, the octahedron, the dodecahedron, and the icosahedron. If we put the point at one end and the sphere at the other we get a set of seven figures, corresponding to the number of planes of our solar system.

You know that in some of the older schools of philosophy it was said: "No one can enter who does not know mathematics." What do you think is meant by

that? Not what we now call mathematics, but the mathematics which embraced the knowledge of the higher planes, of their mutual relations and the way in which the whole is built by the will of God. Plato said, "God geometrises," and it is perfectly true. Those forms are not conceptions of the human brain; they are truths of the higher planes. We have formed the habit of studying the books of Euclid, but we study them now for themselves, and not as a guide to something higher. The old philosophers pondered upon them because they led to the understanding of the true science of life. We have lost sight of the true teaching, and grasp in many cases only the lifeless form.

Another toy with which Bacchus played was a top, the symbol of the whirling atom of which you will find a picture in *Occult Chemistry*. He also plays with a ball which represents the earth, that particular part of the planetary chain to which the thought of the Logos is specially directed at the moment. Also he plays with a mirror. The mirror has always been a symbol of astral light, in which the archetypal ideas are reflected and

then materialised. So you see that each of those toys indicates an essential part in the evolution of a solar system.

A few words may be said about the way in which people were prepared for the study of those mysteries by the different schools; for instance, the Pythagorean school, to which I belonged. In the Pythagorean school, the pupils were divided into three classes. The first was called that of the *akoustikoi* or hearers. This means that they were learners, but it is also true that one of the rules was that they were to keep absolutely silent for two years.

I think this rule would be regarded as a serious drawback by many who join our Society at the present time, but in those olden times a great many people, not only men but women too, submitted to this stipulation. The rule had also another meaning, but it is a fact that during two years the members of the first class were compelled to keep silence. The other meaning was that during all the time, however long, that a man stayed in this class of the *akoustikoi*, he might not give out any teaching, but continued to learn. I have wished that we had some such arrangement in the

Theosophical Society, for it sometimes happens that members who do not yet know much themselves want to teach others, and the teaching is not always recognisable as Theosophy.

The second class of Pythagoreans was called that of the *mathematikoi*. They passed their time in studying geometry, numbers and music. They brought these different subjects into relation to one another and worked out the relations between colour and sound, which are very remarkable.

Let us take an example, which shows how our world is a coherent whole and how we can take facts from different parts which do not seem to have any connection whatever, and bring them into relation with each other. I just spoke about the five platonic polygons. Every one who knows anything about music knows that there is a fixed proportion between the length of the strings which produce certain tones. You know that you can tune a piano according to a certain system of fifths, and that you can express the relation of the different tones to one another by the number of vibrations of each tone; so you can express an harmonious chord in mathematical numbers. This was

first discovered simply by experiment; later the mathematicians found out what the proportions should be, and again by experiment they were found to be exact. But the peculiarity is that the set of numbers which produces an harmonious chord have the same relation to one another as that which exists between certain parts of these platonic solids. I believe that this point was worked out some time ago in an article in the *Theosophical Review* by one of the English cathedral organists.

It is very remarkable that our scale, so different from the old Greek scale, which consisted of five tones, can still be deduced from the proportion of those five platonic figures, which were studied some thousands of years ago in Greece. One is apt to think that there cannot be much relation between mathematics and music, but you see that they are both parts of one great whole.

The third class of the Pythagorean school was formed of the *physikoi*—those who studied physics, the inner connection between phenomena, world-building and metaphysics. They learnt the truth about man and nature and, as far as they could learn it, about Him who made both.

There is still one point in the mysteries which we should not forget to consider—the life of the disciples. A life of perfect purity was strictly required. It is a remarkable coincidence that the life in the Pythagorean school is divided into five periods, almost similar to the five steps of the preparatory path of the Hindus, as described by me in *Invisible Helpers*, and by Mrs. Besant in *The Path of Discipleship*. Almost all the forms and symbols of the present Christian religion are derived from the Egyptian mysteries. All the symbolism, for example, that is related to the Latin cross, and to the descent and sacrifice of the Logos, is taken from the Egyptian mysteries. I have written about this in *The Christian Creed*.

Though the mysteries of Greece and Rome, of Egypt and Chaldæa, are long ago defunct, the world has never been left without avenues of approach to the inner shrine. Even in the gross darkness of the middle ages the Rosicrucians and some other secret societies were ready to teach the truth to those who were ready to learn; and now in these modern days of hurry and materialism the Theosophical Society still upholds

the banner of true knowledge, and acts as a gateway by means of which those who are really in earnest may reach the feet of the Masters of the Wisdom. We have our grades in the Esoteric Section, just as the mysteries had; and behind us, as behind them, stand always the officials of the Great White Brotherhood, who keep in their hands the key to the true initiations.

You must also remember that many things given in those old days only under the seal of secrecy are now made public, and through our Society are given to the world. Many of the greatest and noblest characters of history have passed years in study and work to try to find what is now given us so easily and simply in a few books. Of us is perfectly true what is said in the bible: "Many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them." (*Luke*, x. 24). Because this honour is reserved for us and this opportunity is given us, it seems to me that a great responsibility rests upon us, and that we should try to be worthy of the gift. It is good karma which allows this possibility to open before us. If we let it pass, we

shall not deserve to have another offered us for thousands of years. If you knew, as I know, with what difficulties we had to contend in former days to learn all those things which are laid before us now, perhaps you would appreciate more the opportunity offered you. Let us try to make use of it to the utmost of our power, and show ourselves worthy of the privilege given us by Theosophy.

Second Section

Religion

SECOND SECTION

THE LOGOS

We have in the LOGOS of our solar system as near an approach to a personal (or rather, perhaps, individual) God as any reasonable man can desire, for of Him is true everything good that has ever been predicated of a personal deity. We cannot ascribe to Him partiality, injustice, jealousy, cruelty; those who desire these attributes in their deity must go elsewhere. But so far as His system is concerned He possesses omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence; the love, the power, the wisdom, the glory, all are there in fullest measure. Yet He is a mighty Individual—a trinity in unity, and God in very truth, though removed by we know not how many stages from the Absolute, the Unknowable before which even solar systems are but as specks of

cosmic dust. I do not think that we can image Him at all. The sun is His chief manifestation on the physical plane, and that may help us a little to realise some of His qualities, and to see how everything comes from Him. The sun may be considered as a sort of force-centre in Him, corresponding to the heart of man, the outer manifestation of the principal centre in His body.

Although the whole solar system is His physical body, yet His activities outside of it are enormously greater than those within it. I have myself preferred not even to try to make any image of Him, but simply to contemplate Him as pervading all things, so that even I myself am also He, so that all other men too are He, and in truth there is nothing but God. Yet at the same time, although this that we can see is a manifestation of Him, this solar system that seems so stupendous to us is to Him but a little thing, for, though He is all this, yet outside it and above it all He exists in a glory and a splendour of which we know nothing as yet. Thus though we agree with the pantheist that all is God, we yet go very much further than he does, because

we realise that He has a far greater existence above and beyond His universe. "Having pervaded this whole universe with one fragment of Myself, I remain." (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, x. 42.)

I do not think that we can find any form of words that will at all express the method of our union with Him. We may in one sense be cells in His body, but we are certainly very much more than that, for His life and power are manifested through us in a way which is out of all proportion to any such manifestation of our spiritual life as could be supposed to be given through the cells of our bodies. In His manifestation on the lowest cosmic plane we may take it that His first aspect is on the highest level, the second on that below it, and the third in the higher part of the nirvāṇic plane, so that when an adept gradually raises his consciousness plane by plane as he developes, he comes first to the third aspect and realises his unity with that, moving on only after long intervals to full union with the second and the first.

I myself who speak to you have once seen Him in a form which is not the form of His system. This is something which ut-

terly transcends all ordinary experience, which has nothing to do with any of the lower planes. The thing became possible for me only through a very daring experiment—the utter blending for a moment of two distinct rays or types, so that by means of this blending a level could for a moment be touched enormously higher than any to which either of the egos concerned could have attained alone. He exists far above His system; He sits upon it as on a lotus throne. He is as it were the apotheosis of humanity, yet infinitely greater than humanity. We might think of the Augoeides carried up higher and higher, and to infinity. I do not know whether that form is permanent or whether it can be seen at a certain level only—who shall say? But that this thing is a tremendous reality—that I know; and, once seen, such a manifestation can never be forgotten.

One other little touch of higher experience I may mention, though it is one which is exceedingly difficult to describe adequately. When a man raises his consciousness to the highest subdivision of his causal body, and focusses it exclusively in the atomic matter of the mental plane, he has

before him three possibilities of moving that consciousness, which correspond to some extent with the three dimensions of space. Obviously a way is open to him to move it downwards into the second sub-plane of the mental, or upward into the lowest sub-plane of the buddhic, if he has developed that sufficiently to be able to utilise it as a vehicle.

A second line of movement open to him is the short cut which exists from the atomic subdivision of one plane to the corresponding atomic subdivisions of the planes above and below, so that without touching any intermediate sub-plane the consciousness may pass from that atomic mental downwards to the atomic astral or upwards to the atomic buddhic, again of course supposing the development of this latter to be already achieved. In order to image to oneself this short cut, one may think of the atomic sub-planes as being side by side along a rod, the other subdivisions of each plane hanging from the rod in loops, as though a piece of string were wound loosely round the rod. Obviously then to pass from one atomic subdivision to another one could move by the

short cut straight along the rod, or down and up again through the hanging loop of string which symbolises the lower sub-planes. But there is yet a third possibility—a possibility not so much yet of *movement* along another line at right angles to both of these others, but rather a possibility of looking up such a line—looking up as a man at the bottom of a well might look up at a star in the sky above him.

For there is a direct line of communication between the atomic sub-plane of the mental in this lowest cosmic plane and the corresponding atomic mental in the cosmic mental plane. We are infinitely far as yet from being able to climb upwards by that line, but once at least the experience came of being able to look up it for a moment. What is seen then it is hopeless to try to describe, for no human words can give the least idea of it; but at least this much emerges, with a certitude that can never be shaken, that what we have hitherto supposed to be our consciousness, our intellect, is simply not ours at all, but His; not even a reflection of His, but literally and truly a part of His consciousness, a part of His

intellect. Incomprehensible, yet literally true! It is a commonplace of our meditation to say, "I am that Self; that Self am I," but to see it, to know it, to feel it, to realise it in this way, is something very different from that verbal recitation.

From Him comes forth all life in the successive outpourings which are described in our books—the first outpouring from His third aspect, which gives to previously existing atoms the power to aggregate themselves into the chemical elements—the action which is described in the Christian scriptures as the spirit of God moving over the waters of space. When, at a later stage, the kingdoms of nature are definitely established, there comes the second outpouring, from His second aspect, which forms group-souls for the minerals, the plants, the animals, and this is the descent of the Christ principle into matter, which alone renders possible our very existence. But when we think of the human kingdom we remember that the ego itself is a manifestation of the third outpouring which comes from His first aspect, the eternal and all-loving Father.

Every fixed star is a sun like our own, and each one is a partial expression of a Logos.

BUDDHISM

In thinking of the Lord BUDDHA we must not forget that He is very much more than merely the founder of a religion. He is a great official of the Occult Hierarchy, the greatest of all save one, and the founder in previous incarnations of many religions before this one which now bears His title. For He was the Vyāsa who has done so much for the Indian religion; He was Hermes, the great founder of the Egyptian mysteries; He was the original Zoroaster, from whom came the sun and fire worship; and he was also Orpheus, the great bard of the Greeks.

In this last of His many births, when He came as the Lord Gautama, it does not appear that He had originally any intention of founding a new religion. He appeared simply as a reformer of Hindūism—a faith which was already of hoary antiquity, and had therefore departed much from its original form, as all religions have. It had become hardened in many ways, and appears to have been very far less elastic even than it is now. Even now we all know how strictly drawn are the lines

between the castes, what an iron rigidity there is as to forms and ceremonies. We know that even now no man can be converted to Hindūism; the only way to enter that faith is to be born into it.

Imagine a condition in which all this was even far more rigid, in which the feeling was much more intense, in which all the ideas of life had been very much changed from what they were in the days of the original Aryan immigrants, when it was a religion full of joy, and holding out hope for everybody. A little before the time of the BUDDHA the general opinion seems to have been that practically no one but a brāhman had any chance of salvation at all. Now as the number of the brāhmans was always small, and even now is only something like thirteen millions out of the three hundred million inhabitants of India, it was clearly not a very hopeful religion for the majority of the people, since it indicated to them that they had to work on through very many lives, until they could earn admission into the small and exclusive brāhman caste, before they could possibly escape from the wheel of birth and death.

Then came the Lord BUDDHA, and by His teaching flung open wide the gates of the sweet law of justice, for He taught that men had departed entirely from the old form of religion. He repeatedly asserted that a man who, though born a brāhman, did not live the life which a brāhman should, was neither worthy of respect nor in the way to salvation, and that a man of any other caste who did live the true brāhman life should be treated as a brāhman, and had in every way the same possibilities before him as though he had been born into the sacred caste.

Naturally enough in the face of teachings which placed all hope of final salvation so indefinitely far away in the future, the ordinary man of the world had become hopeless and consequently careless; on the other hand, the austerity of the brāhman, who spent the whole of his life in ceremonies and in meditation, was not to their taste, and indeed was obviously impossible for them. But the BUDDHA preached to them what He called the middle way; He told them that although the life of austerity and of entire devotion to religion was not for them, there was no rea-

son why, because of that, they should relapse into carelessness and evil living. He showed them that a higher life is possible for the man still in the world, and that, though they might not be able to devote themselves to metaphysics and to hair-splitting arguments, they could still obtain sufficient grasp of the great facts of evolution to form a satisfactory guide to them in their lives.

He declared that extremes in either direction are equally irrational; that on the one hand the life of the ordinary man of the world, wrapped up entirely in his business, pursuing dreams of wealth and power, is foolish and defective because it leaves out of account all that is really worthy of consideration; but that on the other hand the extreme asceticism that teaches each man to turn his back upon the world altogether, and to devote himself exclusively and selfishly to the endeavour to shut himself away from it and escape from it, is also foolish. He held that the middle path of truth and beauty is the best and safest, and that while certainly the life devoted entirely to spirituality is the highest of all for those who are ready

for it, there is also a good and true and spiritual life possible for the man who yet holds his place and does his work in the world.

He based His doctrines solely on reason and common-sense; He asked no man to believe anything blindly, but rather told him to open his eyes and look around him. He declared that in spite of all the sorrow and misery of the world, the great scheme of which man is a part is a scheme of eternal justice, and that the law under which we are living is a good law, and needs only that we should understand it and adapt ourselves to it. He taught that all life is suffering, but that man causes his own trouble for himself, because he yields himself perpetually to desire for that which he has not, and He said that happiness and contentment can be gained better by limiting desires than by increasing possessions.

To this end He tabulated His teaching in the most marvellous manner, arranging everything under certain headings which could be readily memorised. This constitutes in reality a carefully graded system of mnemonics. It is so simple in its broad outline

that any child can remember and understand its four noble truths, its noble eightfold path, and the principles of life which they suggest; yet it is carried out so elaborately that it constitutes a system of philosophy which the wisest man may study all his life through, and yet find in it ever more and more light upon the problems of life.

He analysed everything to an almost incredible extent, as may be seen by a study of the twelve nidānas, or by His enumeration of the steps which intervene between thought and action. Each of His four noble truths is represented by a single word, and yet to any one who has ever heard the exposition of the system each of those words inevitably calls up a great range of ideas. The same thing is true of the words signifying the steps of the noble eightfold path, and of the "great perfections" which are spoken of in *The Voice of the Silence*. All of these perfections are simply wisdom, power and love appearing in different forms. They are sometimes reckoned as six, but more commonly as ten. The six are given as perfect charity, perfect morality, perfect patience, perfect energy, perfect truth and perfect

wisdom; and the other four which are sometimes added are perfect resignation, perfect resolution, perfect kindness and perfect abnegation.

The religion of Buddhism has practically disappeared from India, yet it has left behind it lasting results, and the country bears everywhere the strong impress of His teachings. Before His coming blood-sacrifices appear to have been universal; even now they still exist, but are comparatively rare, for He taught that such things were not pleasing to any noble deity, but that the Gods desired rather the sacrifice of a holy life.

In looking back upon the record of those times we see that He preached mostly in the open air, and nearly always sitting at the foot of a tree, with the listeners sitting on the ground about Him, or standing leaning against the trees, men and women intermingling, and little children running about and playing upon the outskirts of the crowd. The great teacher had a most wonderful voice, gloriously full and sonorous, and a personality which instantly commanded the attention of all who heard Him, and invariably won their hearts,

even in the rare cases where they did not agree with what He said. The audiences were stirred up to great religious fervour; we find them constantly raising cries of "Sādhu, Sādhu," by way of applause, when anything was said which especially moved them, and at the same time raising their joined hands in an attitude of salutation.

Part at least of this influence was due to the tremendously strong vibrations of His aura, which was of very great size, so that the audience were actually sitting within it and being attuned to it while they listened to His discourse. Its magnetic effect was almost indescribable, and while His hearers were within its influence even the most stupid of them could understand to the full whatever He said, though often afterwards when they had passed away from that influence they found it difficult to comprehend it at all in the same way. To this marvellous influence also is due the phenomenon so often described in the Buddhist books—the attainment of the arhat level by such large numbers of His hearers. It is quite a common thing to read in the accounts given in the Buddhist scriptures that after a sermon of the BUDDHA

hundreds of men, even thousands, reached the arhat level. Knowing what a very high degree of attainment this means, this seemed to us, when we read it, almost incredible, and we supposed it to be simply a case of oriental exaggeration; but later and closer study has shown us that the accounts are actually true. So remarkable a result seemed to call for further investigation into its causes, and we found that in order to understand all this it was necessary to take into account not this one life only, but the work of many previous incarnations.

We must remember that the Lord Gautama is the BUDDHA of the fourth root-race, even though this last incarnation of His was taken in the fifth. He had been born many times in various Atlantean races, and always as a great teacher. In each of those lives He had drawn around Him many pupils, who had gradually been raised to higher levels of thought and of life, and when He came into India for this last culminating birth He arranged that all those whom at many different times and in many different lands He had influenced should be brought together into incarnation at the same time. Thus His audiences were to a large extent composed

of fully prepared and, as it were, highly specialised souls, and when these came under the influence of the extraordinarily powerful magnetism of a BUDDHA, they understood and followed every word which He said, and the action upon them as egos was of the most wonderfully stimulating nature. Therefore it was that they so readily responded; therefore it was that so large a number of them could be and were raised so rapidly to such dizzy heights.

In the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* we shall find an exceedingly interesting and suggestive section called *The Mystery of Buddha*, which refers to the fact that the BUDDHA prepared His own inner bodies of very high grades of matter, with the fullest development of the spirillæ. His buddhic, causal and mental bodies are kept together for other Great Ones to use, because of the exceeding difficulty of producing others equal to them. The Christ used them along with the physical body of Jesus, while the latter waited on higher planes in his own vehicles. Sankarāchārya also used these "remains." Hence arose the incorrect idea that He was a reincarnation of the BUDDHA. The coming Christ will also use

these vehicles, wedding them to another physical body which is even now being prepared for Him.

Buddhism still claims a larger number of adherents than any other religion in the world, and is a living influence in the lives of millions of our fellow-men. It would be quite unfair to judge it by what is written about it by European orientalists. When I was in Ceylon and Burma I compared these accounts with the interpretation given to the doctrines by the living followers of His religion. Learned monks in these countries approach the subject with an accuracy of knowledge at least equal to that of the most advanced orientalists, but their interpretation of the doctrines is very far less wooden and lifeless. By far the best book in English to give one a real idea of the religion as it is held by living men is *The Light of Asia*, by Sir Edwin Arnold; and another book, which makes a good second to it, is *The Soul of a People*, by H. Fielding Hall. Some critics have said that Sir Edwin Arnold has gone a little beyond the bare literal meaning of the words of the text, and is trying to read Christian ideas into them. I do not think this to be so, and

I have certainly found that he expresses far more closely the feeling and attitude of the Buddhists than any other writer.

Buddhism is now divided into two great Churches, the Northern and the Southern, and both of them have departed to some extent from the original teaching of the BUDDHA, though in different directions. The religion is so plain and straightforward, and so obviously common-sense that almost any person may readily adapt himself to it, without necessarily giving up the beliefs and practices of other faiths. As a consequence of this in the Northern Church we have a form of Buddhism with an immense amount of accretion. It seems to have absorbed into itself many ceremonies and beliefs of the aboriginal faith which it supplanted; so that in Tibet, for example, we find it including a whole hierarchy of minor deities, devas and demons which were entirely unknown to the original scheme of the BUDDHA. The Southern Church, on the other hand, instead of adding to the teaching of the BUDDHA, has lost something from it. It has intensified the material and the abstract side of the philosophy.

It teaches that nothing but Karma

passes over from life to life—that there is no permanent ego in man, but that in his next birth he is in effect a new man, who is the result of the karma of the previous life; and they quote various sayings of the BUDDHA in support of this. It is true that He often spoke very strongly against the persistence of the personality, and that He assured His hearers again and again that nothing whatever which they knew in connection with a man could pass over to another birth. But He nowhere denied the individuality; in fact many of His sayings absolutely affirm it. Take for example a text which occurs in the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya*. When first mentioning the condition and training of the mind that are necessary for success in spiritual progress, the BUDDHA describes how a man can recover the memory of his past lives, and how he sees all the scenes in which he was in any way concerned passing in succession before his mind's eye. He illustrates it by saying:

“If a man goes out from his own village to another and thence to another, and from there comes back again to his own village, he may think thus; ‘I indeed went from my

own village to that other. There I stood thus ; I sat in this manner ; thus I spoke, and thus I remained silent. From that village again I went to another, and I did the same there. The same 'I am' returned from that village to my own village.' In the very same way, O King, the ascetic, when his mind is pure, knows his former births. He thinks : 'In such a place I had such a name. I was born in such a family, such was my caste, such was my food, and in such and such a way I experienced pleasure and pain, and my life extended through in some other place, and there also I had such and such conditions. Thence removed, the same 'I' am now born here''.

This quotation shows very clearly the doctrine of the BUDDHA with regard to the reincarnating ego. He gives illustrations also in the same Sutta of the manner in which an ascetic can know the past births of others—how he can see them die in one place, and after the sorrows and joys of hell and heaven the same men are born again somewhere else. It is true that in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* He mentions all the various aspects of the soul, and says that

they do not *absolutely* exist, because their existence depends upon "contact," that is to say upon relation. But in thus denying the *absolute* reality of the soul He agrees with the other great Indian teachers, for the existence not only of the soul but even of the LOGOS Himself is true only relatively.

Untrained minds frequently misunderstand these ideas, but the careful student of oriental thought will not fail to grasp exactly what is meant, and to realise that the teaching of the BUDDHA in this respect is exactly that now given by Theosophy. It is not difficult to see how these various texts might be so emphasised or distorted as to seem to contradict one another, and the Southern Church has chosen to cling rather to the denial of the permanence of the personality than to the assertion of the continuity of the individuality, just as in Christianity some people have acquired the habit of laying stress on particular texts, and ignoring others which contradict them.

Another point as to which there is a very similar misunderstanding is the constantly repeated assertion that nirvāna is equivalent to annihilation. Even Max Müller,

the great Oxford Sanskritist, was under this delusion for many years, but later in his life with further and deeper study he came to understand that in this he had been mistaken. The description which the Lord BUDDHA Himself gives of nirvāna is so far above the comprehension of any man who is trained only in ordinary and worldly methods of thought that it is little wonder that it should have been misunderstood at first sight by the European orientalists; but no one who has lived in the East among the Buddhists can for a moment suppose that they regard annihilation as the end which they are striving to reach.

It is quite true that the attaining of nirvāna does involve the utter annihilation of that lower side of man which is in truth all that we know of him at the present time. The personality, like everything connected with the lower vehicles, is impermanent and will disappear. If we endeavour to realise what man would be when deprived of all which is included under these terms we shall see that for us at our present stage it would be difficult to comprehend that anything remained, and yet the truth is that everything remains—that in the glorified spirit

which then exists, all the essence of all the qualities which have been developed through the centuries of strife and stress in earthly incarnation will inhere to the fullest possible degree. The man has become more than man, since he is now on the threshold of Divinity; yet he is still himself, even though it be a so much wider self.

Many definitions have been given of nirvāna, and naturally none of them can possibly be satisfactory; perhaps the best on the whole is that of peace in omniscience. Many years ago when I was preparing a simple introductory catechism of their religion for Buddhist children, the chief Abbot Sumangala himself gave me as the best definition of nirvāna to put before them that it was a condition of peace and blessedness so high above our present state that it was impossible for us to understand it. Surely that is far removed from the idea of annihilation. Truly all that we now call the man has disappeared, but that is not because the individuality is annihilated, but because it is lost in divinity.

The BUDDHA Himself once said: "Nirvāna is not being, but also it is not non-being."

Another difference between the Northern Church of Buddhism and the Southern is that they adopt different versions of the scriptures. It is usually stated that the Northern Church adopts the Mahāyāna and the Southern the Hīnayāna, but whether even this much may be safely said depends upon the shade of meaning which we attach to a much-disputed word. Yāna means vehicle, and it is agreed that it is to be applied to the dhamma or law, as the vessel which conveys us across the sea of life to nirvāna, but there are at least five theories as to the exact sense in which it is to be taken.

1. That it refers simply to the language in which the law is written, the greater vehicle being by this hypothesis Sanskrit, and the lesser vehicle Pālī—a theory which seems to me untenable. It is true that the Northern Church uses the Sanskrit translation, while the Southern scriptures are in Pālī, the language which the Lord BUDDHA spoke when on earth. It is stated that the Pālī scriptures which we now possess are not in the original form, but that all the originals existing (in Ceylon at least) were carefully destroyed by the Tamil invaders, so that the Pālī scriptures

which we now have are a re-translation made from a copy in Elu, then the vernacular language of Ceylon.

2. Hīna may apparently be taken as signifying mean or easy, as well as small. One interpretation therefore considers that the Hīnayāna is the meaner or easier road to liberation—the irreducible minimum of knowledge and conduct required to attain it, while the Mahāyāna is the fuller and more philosophical doctrine, which includes much traditional knowledge about higher realms of nature. Needless to say, this interpretation comes from a Mahāyāna source.

3. That Buddhism, in its unfailing courtesy towards other religions, accepts them all as ways to liberation, though it regards the method taught by its founder as offering the shortest and surest route. According to this view Buddhism is the Mahāyāna, and the Hīnayāna includes Brāhmanism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, and any other religions which were existing at the time when the definition was formulated.

4. That the two doctrines are simply two stages of one doctrine—the Hīnayāna for the Srāvakas or hearers, and the Mahāyāna for more advanced students.

5. That the word Yāna is to be understood not exactly in its primary sense of 'vehicle,' but rather in its secondary sense, nearly equivalent to the English word 'career.' According to this interpretation the Mahāyāna puts before the man the 'grand career' of becoming a Bodhisattwa and devoting himself to the welfare of the world, while the Hīnayāna shows him only the smaller 'career' of so living as to attain nirvāna for himself.

There has also been much discussion as to the exact meaning of the terms Ādi-Buddha and Avalokiteshwara. I have made no special study of these things from the philosophical standpoint, but so far as I have been able to gather ideas from discussion of the matter with the living exponents of the religion, Ādi-Buddha seems to be the culmination of one of the great lines of superhuman development—what might be called the abstract principle of all the Buddhas. Avalokiteshwara is a term belonging to the Northern Church, and seems to be the Buddhists' name for their conception of the Logos. European scholars have translated it: "The Lord who looks down from on high," but this seems to

have in it a somewhat inaccurate implication, for it is clearly always the manifested LOGOS; sometimes the LOGOS of a solar system and sometimes higher than that, but always manifest. We must not forget that while the founders of the great religions see and know the things which They name, Their followers usually do not see; they have only the names, and they juggle with them as intellectual counters, and build up much which is incorrect and inconsistent.

The Buddhism of the Southern Church, which includes Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Cambodia, has on the whole kept its religion free from the accretions which have become so prominent in the Northern division of Japan, China and Tibet. In Burma no image appears in the temples except that of the BUDDHA, though of Him there are in some cases hundreds of images, of different material, in different positions, presented by various worshippers. In Ceylon a certain concession seems to have been made to popular feeling, or perhaps to a foreign government during the time of the Tamil kings, for the images of certain Hindū deities are often to be seen in the temples, though they are always

placed in a subordinate position and considered as a kind of attendants upon the BUDDHA. We need not however blame the Tibetans very much for the fact that certain superstitions have crept into their Buddhism. The same thing happens in all countries, and with all religions, as time goes on. In Italy, for example, numbers of the peasants in the hills still follow what they call the old religion, and continue even in the present day the worship of Bacchus, under an Etruscan name which antedates even the time of the Roman Empire. The Catholic priests quite recognise the existence of this older faith, and set themselves against it, but without avail.

In Southern Buddhism there is remarkably little ceremony of any kind—practically nothing indeed that in any way corresponds to the Christian service. When the people pay their morning visit to the temple they usually call upon the monks to recite for them the three guides and the five precepts, which they then repeat after him, but even this can hardly be called a public service, for it is recited not once at a set time, but for each group of people as they happen to arrive. There is another

ceremony called Paritta or Pirit (which means 'blessings') but this is not performed in the temple itself nor at any stated times, but it is considered a good work on the part of the laity to celebrate any special occasion by giving a Pirit ceremony—that is to say by erecting and elaborately decorating a temporary building in which the ceremony is held. It consists of the chanting of benedictory verses from the sacred scriptures, and is carried on for a certain number of days, usually a fortnight, by relays of monks who relieve one another every hour.

Sometimes when a man falls ill one of these Pirit ceremonies is arranged for him, with the idea that it will promote his recovery. It is in reality a mesmeric ceremony, for the monks sit in a circle and hold in their hands a rope which runs round the circle, and they are instructed to recite their texts, keeping clearly in their minds all the time the will to bless. Naturally this rope becomes very strongly magnetised as the ceremony progresses, and strings run from it to a huge pot of water, which of course also becomes highly charged with magnetism. At the conclusion of the ceremony this water is distributed among the people, and the sick

man often holds a thread which is connected with the rope.

The Southern Buddhists give a list of five psychic powers which may be gained by the man who is making progress on the Path. (1) The ability to pass through the air and through solid objects, and to visit the heaven-world while still alive. It is however possible that this may mean nothing more than ability to function freely in the astral body, because it is quite likely that in speaking of the heaven-world they do not really mean the mental plane, but only the higher levels of the astral. (2) Divinely clear hearing—which is evidently merely the astral faculty of clairaudience. (3) The ability to comprehend and sympathise with all that is in the minds of others—which appears to be thought-reading, or perhaps telepathy. (4) The power to remember former births. (5) Divinely clear vision—that is to say, clairvoyance. To this is added in some lists the attainment of deliverance by wisdom. This must of course mean the attainment of freedom from the necessity of rebirth, but it does not seem to be of the same nature as the other powers, and perhaps should hardly appear in the same category.

Ānanda is said to have been the favourite disciple of the Lord BUDDHA, just as John is spoken of as the beloved disciple of the Christ, and no doubt in both cases the special intimacy was the result of relationship in previous lives. Ānanda was certainly not so chosen because he was the most advanced, for even after the death of the BUDDHA we hear that when the first great council was held in a cave within the living rock, and the condition of taking part in it was that none should enter who could not pass through the rock, Ānanda found himself shut out from it because he had not yet attained this power. But it is said that his grief at this exclusion from a grand opportunity of serving his departed Master was so great that by a supreme effort of will he then and there developed the power which had been lacking, and passed in triumphantly to take his place among his brothers, though a little late.

This shows us that even those who are the most highly advanced of all humanity have still their special friendships, and that therefore to love one person more than another cannot be improper. It is

true that such affection as you now feel for your nearest and dearest you will feel later on for the whole world, but at that time you will feel a thousand times more affection for those who are nearest to you. Your love will never be the same for all, although all will be included within it. It is impossible that we should feel towards another as we do towards our Master, for when He becomes a Logos we shall be part of His system, and even when far later on we ourselves become LOGOI we shall still be part of Him, for He will represent some far greater system. Although there will always be greater love for some than others, we shall help those whom we love less just as fully as those whom we love more. We shall always do our best for all, just as a doctor equally helps his patient whether he be a friend or not, for anything like dislike or hatred will have ceased æons before.

At the time of the Lord BUDDHA many other spiritual teachers were sent forth to the world. We find for example Lao-tse, Confucius and Pythagoras, all working in their different spheres. Advantage was taken of the stupendous outpouring of

spiritual force at the time to send forth teachers into many parts of the world.

CHRISTIANITY

There is nothing in the principles of Theosophy which is at all in opposition to the true primitive Christianity, though there may be statements which cannot be reconciled with some of the mistakes of modern popular theology. This modern theology attaches immense importance to texts; in fact it appears to me to be based upon one or two texts almost entirely. It takes these and gives to them a particular interpretation, often in direct opposition to the plain meaning of other texts from the same bible. Of course there are contradictions in the Christian scripture just as there must necessarily be in any book of that size, the various parts of which were written at such widely separated periods of the world's history, and by people so unequal in knowledge and in civilisation.

It is impossible that all the statements made in it can be literally true, but we

can go back behind them all, and try to find out what the original teacher did lay before His pupils. Since there are many contradictions and many interpretations it is obviously the duty of a thinking Christian to weigh carefully the different versions of his faith which exist in the world, and decide between them according to his own reason and common-sense.

Every Christian does, as a matter of fact, decide for himself now; he chooses to be a Roman Catholic, or a member of the Church of England, or a Methodist, or a Salvationist, though each of these sects professes to have the only genuine brand of Christianity, and justifies its claim by the quotation of texts. How then does the ordinary layman decide between their rival claims? Either he accepts blindly the faith which his father held, and does not examine the matter at all, or else he does examine it, and then he decides by the exercise of his own judgment.

If he is already doing that, it would be absurd and inconsistent for him to refuse to examine *all* texts, instead of basing his belief only upon one or two. If he does impartially examine all texts, he will certainly find many which support Theosophical truth.

He will find also that the creeds can be rationally interpreted only by Theosophy. Of course in order to make an intelligent comparison between these different systems it will be necessary for him to make some enquiries into the history of his own religion, and to see how the Christian doctrine came to be what it now is.

He will find that in the early Christian Church there were three principal divisions or parties. There were first of all the Gnostic Doctors or teachers, wise and cultured men who held that the Christian Church had its system of philosophy of the same nature as the great Greek and Roman systems which existed at that time. They said that this system, while thoroughly comprehensive and very beautiful, was difficult to understand, and therefore they did not recommend its study to the ignorant. They spoke of it as the Gnosis or knowledge—the knowledge which was possessed by those who were full members of the church, but was not given out to the world at large, and not even told to the more ignorant members of the church while they were in that preliminary stage when they had not received the sacraments.

Then there was the second division, a body of respectable middle-class people, who troubled themselves not at all about the philosophy, but simply were content to take the words of the Christ as their guide in life. They used as a sacred book a collection of His sayings, some leaves of which have recently been discovered by antiquarians.

Then there was unfortunately a great mass of ignorant and turbulent people who never had any grasp whatever of Christian doctrine, but became members of the church merely because of the prophecies, given by the Christ, of a good time to come. He was very much moved by the sufferings of the poor, and full of compassion and pity for them. He told them constantly, in His teachings, to take comfort, because the poor man who endures the struggle bravely and well will in the future have a better position and greater advancement than the rich man who misuses his opportunities. One can readily see how that doctrine preached to an exceedingly ignorant people might be taken in a one-sided manner. They would take the promises and not the conditions, and their idea of that good time might easily be that they in turn would be the

oppressors and would take advantage of the rich man—something which of course the Christ never preached. So it came to pass that He attracted to himself a great crowd of men who for various reasons were against the existing government; and when these ignorant people in turn preached what they called Christianity to others, they naturally intensified and exaggerated their own misconceptions of it. This great mass of the common people, who called themselves ‘the poor men,’ speedily became a vast majority in the infant church, and gained so much power that they were eventually able to throw out the Gnostic Doctors as heretics; for the ‘poor men’ resented the idea that any knowledge which they did not possess could be regarded as an essential part of Christianity.

There is yet another point of view from which the Christian may find Theosophy of the greatest use to him. Just now the minds of many orthodox Christians are much exercised with regard to what they call the higher criticism—that is, the attempt to apply ordinary common-sense and scientific methods to the examination of the religious teaching—the endeavour to

understand religion instead of blindly believing it. For many ages the world has been told that ecclesiastical dogmas must be swallowed like pills, and that to attempt to reason about them is impious. There are many men in the world, and they are among the most intellectual of its citizens, who simply cannot accept doctrines thus blindly and uncomprehendingly. Before they can believe they must to some extent understand, and a statement does not become a living fact to them until they can relate it rationally to other facts, and regard it as part of a more or less comprehensible scheme of things.

It is ridiculous to say (as some of the orthodox do) that these people are inherently wicked and that their attitude is inspired by the devil. On the contrary they are precisely the men who truly appreciate God's great gift of reason, and are determined to employ it in the highest of all possible directions—for the elucidation of the truth about religion. The truth is that the critics are of the greatest possible service to religion; they are clearing up points in it which heretofore have been vague; they are stating with accuracy

matters in connection with it which were previously very partially understood; they are trying to make a reasonable system out of what has until now been nothing but a mass of meaningless confusion.

If any of our members have orthodox friends who are disturbed by these efforts, who fear lest this liberalising and rationalising of their faith should refine it altogether out of existence, let them recommend to them the teachings of Theosophy, for that is the very thing which they need. It will teach them to pause before throwing aside ancestral belief, and it will show them that when properly understood that belief has a real meaning and a real foundation, and that, while some of the vagaries of mediæval ecclesiastical dogma may be incomprehensible and incredible, the original teaching of the Christ was a magnificent presentment of universal truth.

If they have somewhat outgrown the outer form of their religion, if they have broken through the chrysalis of blind faith, and mounted on the wings of reason and intuition to the freer, nobler mental life of more exalted levels, Theosophy will show them that in all this there has been no

loss, but a great and glorious gain. For it tells them that the glow of devotion which has meant so much to them in their spiritual life is more than justified, that the splendour and beauty and poetry of religious thought exist in fuller measure than they have ever hoped before—no longer as mere pleasant dreams from which the cold light of common-sense may at any time rudely awaken them, but as truths of nature which will bear investigation, which become only brighter and more perfect as they are more accurately understood.

Certainly the Christian bible ought not to be taken literally, for many of its statements are symbolical, and others are simply not true. When we examine clairvoyantly the life of the founder of Christianity, for example, we can find no trace of the alleged twelve apostles; it would seem that as men they never existed, but that they were introduced into the story for some reason—possibly to typify the twelve signs of the zodiac. The disciple Jesus, whose body was taken by the Christ, was not an illegitimate son, as is implied in the gospel, nor was his father a carpenter. He was in

reality of the highest aristocracy of the Jews, a descendant of their own old royal line. He may however have had a tinge of Āryan blood in him, which would be quite enough to cause the exclusive Jews to say that he was not legitimately of the seed of David, and that statement might very easily be taken to mean such an irregular birth as is suggested by the narrative.

The truth is that the four gospels at any rate were never intended to be taken as in any sense historical. They are all founded upon a much shorter document written in Hebrew by a monk named Matthæus, who lived in a monastery in a desert to the south of Palestine. He seems to have conceived the idea of casting some of the great facts of initiation into a narrative form and mingling with it some points out of the life of the real Jesus who was born 105 B. C., and some from the life of another quite obscure fanatical preacher, who had been condemned to death and executed in Jerusalem about 30 A. D.

He sent this document to a great friend of his who was the chief abbot of a huge monastery at Alexandria, and suggested to

him that he, or some of his assistants, might perhaps recast it, and issue it in the Greek language. The Alexandrian abbot seems to have employed a number of his young monks upon this work, allowing each of them to try the task for himself, and to treat it in his own way. A number of documents of very varying merit were thus produced, each incorporating in his story more or less of the original manuscript of Matthæus, but each also adding to it such legends as he happened to know, or as his taste and fancy dictated. Four of these still survive to us, and to them are attached the names of the monks who wrote them, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The splendid passage with which the gospel of St. John opens was not original but quoted, for we found it in existence many years before the time of the Christ in a manuscript which was even then of hoary antiquity.

It was associated in that manuscript with a quotation from the Stanzas of Dzyān, this latter also being translated into Greek.

SIN

You ask what is the real meaning of sin. In the sense in which the word is ordinarily employed, at least by Christian preachers, I think sin may be defined as a figment of the theological imagination. It is popularly supposed to indicate a defiance of divine law—the performance of some action which the actor knows to be wrong. It is exceedingly doubtful whether this phenomenon ever occurs. In almost every conceivable case man breaks the law through ignorance or heedlessness, and not of deliberate intention. When once a man really knows and sees the divine intention he inevitably comes into harmony with it, for two reasons: at an earlier stage because he sees the utter futility of doing otherwise, and later because, seeing the glory and beauty of the design, he cannot but throw himself into its execution with all the powers of his heart and soul.

One of the most serious of the many misconceptions which we have inherited from the dark ages is that what is called ‘sin’ is a perversity to be met with punishment and savage persecution, instead of what it really

is, the result of a condition of ignorance that can only be dealt with by enlightenment and education. It may be objected that in daily life we constantly see people doing what they must know to be wrong, but this is a misstatement of the case. They are doing what they have been *told* is wrong, which is quite a different matter. If a man really *knows* that an action is wrong, and that it will inevitably be followed by evil consequences, he is careful to avoid it. A man really *knows* that fire will burn him; therefore he does not put his hand into it. He has been *told* that the fire of hell will burn him as the result of a certain action—say playing cards on a Sunday—but he does not really *know* this, and therefore when he feels the inclination to play cards he does so in spite of the threatened consequences. It will be found that every one who does wrong justifies the wrong action to himself at the time of its commission, whatever he may think about it afterwards in cold blood. So I say that sin as ordinarily understood is a figment of the theological imagination; what really exists is an unfortunate condition of ignorance which often leads to infraction of the

divine Law. This ignorance it is our duty to endeavour to dispel by the light of Theosophy.

THE POPE

A magnificent opportunity is waiting for the Pope who shall be ready and brave enough to take it. Instead of fulminating rescripts and bulls against Theosophy and liberalism, he might himself propound the Theosophical interpretation of Christianity. Remember that the Catholic Church possesses what is called the doctrine of development, and also that it has proclaimed the Pope to be the infallible exponent of divine doctrine, the vicegerent of God upon earth. He would therefore be perfectly within his rights if, with regard to the Theosophical interpretation, he should pronounce quite boldly :

“Certainly this which you bring forward is the true meaning of Christian doctrine. We have always known this, and we have plenty of manuscripts in the Vatican Library to prove it. We did not tell you this be-

fore, because all through the ages until now men have not been fit for such a revelation. They have been too crude, too rough, too undeveloped to understand a philosophical and mystical interpretation. The outer husk of the religion has been all that could usefully be offered to them. Now one stage more has been attained and the world is ready for this further revelation. The second and inner meaning of our doctrine is therefore put before you, and while we must not condemn those who are still at the stage when they must cling to the outer husk, neither must they on their part be allowed to condemn those who are ready to take the further step and to receive a higher illumination."

But of course he must indeed be a strong as well as a wise man who should do this, for like all other great personages the Pope is surrounded by enormous masses of thought-forms, and he would find it a matter of extreme difficulty to break through these and make a new departure.

CEREMONIAL

The line of ceremonial is one along which many people come, but of course it must be understood that no religious ceremonial whatever is ever really essential, and the man who wishes to enter upon the Path of Holiness must realise this fully and must cast off belief in the necessity of ceremonies, as one of the fetters which hold him back from nirvāna. This does not mean that ceremonies may not be sometimes quite effective in producing the results which are intended, but only that they are never really necessary for any one, and that the candidate for higher progress must learn to do utterly without them. The ceremonial line is an easy road for a certain type of people, and is really helpful and uplifting for them; but there is another type of men who always feel ceremonial as an obstacle between themselves and the deities which they wish to reach.

In Christianity this ceremonial line is the one appointed by its founder, through which his magic is to work. The consecration of the host, for example, is a means by which spiritual force is poured out over

the people. There is often a vast amount of devotional feeling at the moment of the consecration, and the working of the magic is assisted by that, though it does not depend upon it. Those who are devotional unquestionably receive more, because they bring with them an additional faculty of reception. On the other hand, there is always the probability that ignorant devotion will degenerate into superstition. In a recent enquiry into these matters from the occult point of view, made in Sicily, I found that there was certainly plenty of superstition, and much harmful interference in family matters on the part of the priests; but still on the whole the country was distinctly better off—very much better off—with its religion than it would have been without it. We should remember also that in history we usually hear much of the worst effects of religious enthusiasm, whereas the good steady progress of many thousands under its influence makes but little impression.

PRAYER

It is difficult to say anything on the question of prayer that would be universally applicable, because there are such very different kinds of prayer, and they are addressed to beings who differ very widely in evolution. The founders of most great religions never in any way encouraged their followers to pray to them, and as a rule the latter have been far too enlightened to do anything of the kind. Whether a very strong thought directed towards them would reach them or not would depend upon the line of evolution which they have since followed—in fact upon whether they still remain within touch of this earth or not. If they were still so within reach, and if such a thought did reach them, it is probable that if they saw that it would be good for the thinker that any notice should be taken they would turn in his direction the attention of some of their pupils who are still upon earth. But it is quite inconceivable that a man who had any sort of conception of the magnificent and far-reaching work done for evolution by the Great Ones on higher planes could dream of in-

truding his own petty concerns upon Their notice; he could not but know that any kind of help that he required would be far more fitly given to him by someone nearer to his own level. Even down here on this physical plane we are wiser than that, for we do not waste the time of the greatest scholars of our universities in helping babies over the difficulties of the alphabet.

As regards the saints of any of the churches the position is different, though even with them the ability to hear prayers will depend upon their position in evolution. The ordinary saint, who is simply a good and holy man, will of course take his heaven-life as usual, and will probably take a long one. His life on the astral plane would be likely to be but short, and it would be only during that that it would be possible for a prayer to reach him and attract his attention. If during that time it did so reach him, no doubt he would do anything that he could to satisfy the petitioner; but it is by no means certain that it would attract his attention, for he would naturally be fully occupied with his new surroundings.

When he entered upon his long rest in the heaven-world he would be entirely beyond any possibility of being disturbed by earthly things; yet even in such a case a prayer to him might not be without effect in connection with him. Such a man would almost certainly be pouring out a constant stream of loving thought towards humanity, and this thought would be a real and potent shower of blessing, tending generally towards the spiritual helping of those upon whom it fell; and there is no doubt that the man who was earnestly thinking of or praying to that saint would come into rapport with him, and would therefore draw down upon himself a great deal of that force, though entirely without the knowledge of the saint from whom it came. If the saint were sufficiently advanced to have entered upon a special series of births rapidly following one another the case would be different again. He would then be all the time within reach of earth, either living on the astral plane or in incarnation upon the physical, and if the prayer were strong enough to attract his attention at any time when he was for a moment out of his body, he would probably give any help in his power.

But fortunately for the many thousands who are constantly pouring forth their souls in prayer—in the blindest ignorance, of course, but still in perfect good faith—there is something else to depend upon which is independent of all these considerations. Shri Krishna tells us, in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, how all true prayers come to Him, to whomsoever they may have been ignorantly offered; there is a consciousness wide enough to comprehend all, which never fails in its response to any earnest effort in the direction of an increased spirituality. It works through many means; sometimes perhaps by directing the attention of a deva to the suppliant, sometimes through the agency of those human helpers who work upon the astral or mental planes for the good of humanity. Such a deva or helper so used would, if he showed himself, inevitably be taken by the petitioner for the saint to whom he had prayed, and there are many stories which illustrate this.

I myself, for example, have been taken under such circumstances for S. Philip Neri, and a junior helper who was with me on the occasion was supposed to be S. Stanislaus Kostka. Our President, too, has more

than once been regarded as an angel by those whom she was assisting.

THE DEVIL

The devil is non-existent. There are persons who imagine themselves to have made pacts with him, sometimes signed with their own blood. The result depends largely upon what sort of entity happened to personate him for the occasion. There are plenty of creatures of various sorts who would hugely enjoy such a joke at the expense of a man; but no such entity, whatever he may be, could possibly have any use for the 'soul' of a man—nor would the 'soul' of anybody foolish enough to make such a compact be likely to be of any use, either to the owner or anybody else. All these absurd superstitions are disproved by the fact that the man is the ego, and therefore cannot sell himself, and also that there are no buyers in such a transaction; so the whole thing is nothing but foolishness.

There are many entities who may be both willing and able to arrange twenty

years of material prosperity for a person. They are generally willing to do it in return for some material consideration, such as the sacrifice of babies, goats or fowls. The ego has no share in these pacts, either in the rare individual cases, or in general fetish worship. These entities cannot possess the human ego, nor could they use it if it could come into their possession. A human body is sometimes convenient for them, and for the sake of being permitted to obsess it they will sometimes enter into an arrangement. The making of a compact of this nature gives the entity a strong hold upon the man; but as soon as he discovers the folly of his action, the proper course for the man to take is to resist such obsession to the utmost. Childish ceremonies, such as signing with his own blood, would of course make no difference whatever.

There is no hierarchy of evil. There are black magicians certainly, but the black magician is usually merely a single solitary entity. He is working for himself, as a separate entity, and for his own ends. You cannot have a hierarchy of people who distrust one another. In the White Brotherhood

every member trusts the others; but you cannot have trust with the dark people, because their interests are built upon self.

You must, however, take care what you mean when you speak of evil. The principle of destruction is often personified, but it is only that old forms are broken down to be used as material for building new and higher ones. Here in India there is Shiva, the Destroyer, but no one would think of Him as evil; He is one of the highest manifestations of the deity. The principle of the destruction of forms is necessary in order that life may progress. There is a Great One, a part of whose function it is to arrange when the great cataclysms shall take place—but He works for the good of the world. These things are not to be thought of as in any way evil. The notion of a supposed angel who revolted and was turned out of heaven is very much based upon John Milton. The conception is not at all the same in the Book of Job. In that story the devil is quite a different person from the gloomy hero in the Miltonic conception. Then the Buddhists have Māra—a personification of the karma of the past descending upon the man at once and taking many

forms. There is an instant working-out of karma upon the attainment of enlightenment.

The statement that all material things, all differences and limitations are evil is misleading. If by evil you mean what is ordinarily connoted by that word, and not some other and quite different notion of an abstract kind, then matter is not evil. Spirit and matter are equal. Matter is not in opposition to spirit. We find matter troublesome because of the bodies we have to use; but we are here in order to learn what without the physical life could not be conveyed to us. The physical plane experiences give a definiteness and precision to our consciousness and powers which we could never acquire on any plane unless we had spent the necessary time on this. But why do people bother about evil? There is plenty of good in the world, and it is better to think of that, for your thought strengthens that of which you think. To think and talk so much about black magicians unquestionably attracts their attention to you, and the results are often exceedingly undesirable.

HINDUISM

When ignorant missionaries dilate upon the three hundred and thirty million gods of the Hindūs they are making a very gross misrepresentation of a religion which is far more scientific than their own. Hindūism, like every other religion, knows perfectly well that there can be only one God, though there may be countless manifestations of Him. To call these 'gods' is of course ridiculous. It is perhaps better to avoid the word 'god' altogether, because of the exceedingly unpleasant ideas which have been associated with it by the Christians; but if it is to be used, at least it should never be applied to any being lower than the LOGOS of the solar system. All the good things attributed to the Christian God are true of the LOGOS; there is nothing in the system that is not He, and yet He is much more than His system. We could not possibly grasp the truth about the Absolute; anything which we are able to grasp must after all be small, since our minds are so small. The advice of the Lord BUDDHA to His people was always that they should ~~not~~—trouble themselves

about such remote matters, since it was impossible to arrive at any conclusion, and nothing useful came from it.

The images of the Indian deities are usually highly magnetised, and when they are carried round the streets at the festivals their influence upon the people is unquestionably productive of much good. In many of the Hindū temples there are strong permanent influences at work, as is the case for example at Madura. Once when I visited that city some white ashes from the temple of Shiva were given to me, and also a bright crimson powder from the temple of Pārvatī, and I found that both of these were so powerfully magnetised as to retain their influence for some years and after much travelling.

India is essentially a country of rites and ceremonies. The religion is full of them, and a great many of them are said to have been prescribed by the Manu Himself, though it is quite obvious that many others have been added at a much later date. Some of them appear to be regulations such as would be quite necessary at the beginning of a new race, but now that it is thoroughly established it seems clear

that they are useless. In many cases when one watches their performance one can see quite clearly what must originally have been intended, even though now the ceremony has become a mere empty shell, and no result follows upon it. Such things are not without their value for younger souls; indeed there are many who delight in them and obtain great benefit from them; but of course none of them can ever be really necessary, and all such bondage falls away altogether from the really developed man.

Originally every householder was the priest of his own family, but as the civilisation became more complex the rites and ceremonies grew more complex also, and therefore a class of specially instructed priests had to spring up, because no one who had anything else to do could possibly remember the wealth of unnecessary detail. In these days it would seem that most people perform them, or have them performed for them, much in the same spirit as they take medicine from a doctor, without understanding what it is, but with the faith that it will somehow do them good. There are, however, many people who cannot put heart and soul into a cere-

mony unless they do understand it, and these people usually end by breaking away from ceremonies altogether.

It is sad to see priests performing the old ceremonies and using the old forms which once were so effective, and yet producing no result worth mentioning. There seems to be no will in these days. They commence some of their recitations "Om, Bhūr, Bhuvār, Swar;" but nothing whatever happens when they recite the words. In the old days the officiant who said this threw some will into it, and raised his own consciousness, as well as that of those present who were responsive, from one plane to the other as he spoke.

I remember seeing this strongly exemplified in the performance of a striking ceremony, when we were examining one of the earlier lives which occurred many thousands of years ago here in India. The people all entered an inner room and stood in absolute darkness. In the beginning of the ceremony the officiant slowly and solemnly uttered those words, and each produced its due effect upon the majority of those who stood around him. The word "Om" brought all the people into close

harmony with him, and with the feelings which filled his mind. Then, at the utterance of the word "Bhūr," to their senses the room was filled with ordinary light, and they were able to see all the physical objects in it; when, after an interval, the second word came, astral sight was temporarily opened for them; and the third word produced the same effect upon their mental sight, and brought round them all the bliss and power of the higher plane, and that condition persisted during the recitation of the various verses which followed.

Of course these effects were only temporary, and when the ceremony was over the higher consciousness faded away from those who had taken part in it, but nevertheless it remained for them a tremendous experience, and the effect of it was that on another similar occasion this higher consciousness was more readily and more fully aroused in them. But now nothing of this sort seems to be done anywhere. Now the priest arranges his fuel and utters a solemn invocation to Agni, and then—lights the fire with a match! In the old days that which is represented by Agni

really did come, and the fire fell from heaven, to use an old expression. But all this has now been forgotten and only the outer husks seem to remain.

There is a quite rational and scientific idea underlying the practice of pilgrimage. Great shrines are usually erected on the spot where some holy man has lived or where some great event has happened (such as an initiation) or else in connection with some relic of a great person. In any one of these cases a powerful magnetic centre of influence has been created, which will persist for thousands of years. Any sensitive person who approaches the spot will feel this influence, and its effect upon him is unquestionably good. Where there is a strong vibration at a much higher level than any attained by ordinary humanity, its action upon any man who comes within its influence is to raise his own vibrations for the time towards unison with it.

The pilgrim who comes to such a spot and bathes himself in its magnetism, perhaps for several days together, is certainly the better for it, although different people will be affected in different degrees,

according to their power of receptivity. Such a place of pilgrimage is the Bodhi tree at Buddha-gayā, the spot where the Lord Gautama attained His Buddhahood. This is true although the tree which is there now is not the original one. That fell some time in the middle ages, and the present tree is only an offshoot from it. But nevertheless the tremendously strong magnetism of the spot remains, and is likely to do so for many a century yet to come.

CASTES

It is said that originally each caste had its distinctive colour; indeed, the actual meaning of *varna* (the Sanskrit word for caste) is colour. I have not studied the question, but at least it is clear that the colours which are usually given do not indicate in any way the auras of the people. Only a young child has a white aura, and even the adepts have various colours in Their tremendous glow; yet for some reason the brāhman is traditionally mentioned as white. A kshat-

triya is said to have some connection with the colour red; there are several reds in the human aura, from the rose of affection to the scarlet of anger and indignation, and the brown-reds of sensuality. But the kshattriya has no more of these than other men. Yellow is traditionally ascribed to the vaishya. But yellow in the aura signifies intellect, and we have no reason to consider the vaishya especially endowed with this quality. A shūdra is spoken of as black.

If we adopt the suggestion that these colours had to do with the ancient and primitive races, we shall find the facts more tractable. The Āryans, representing the brāhman caste, were undoubtedly much lighter in colour than the people amongst whom they came. The reddish Toltec people who were ruling large portions of the land when the Āryan invasion took place may have some connection with the original kshattriya caste. The aborigines, who were Lemurians, and are now only represented by some of the hill tribes, were almost black in colour. They may be connected with the shūdras. Between them and the Toltecs there appear to have been several

waves of different Atlantean sub-races who settled down as traders; and these men were of a yellowish colour, as is the present day Chinaman. Perhaps they were the original vaishyas.

No doubt as we carry further and further back the investigations which we are making in connection with the lines of past lives which are now being examined, we shall obtain more definite information on the subject of the origin of these castes, and of this question of their relation to colour.

SPIRITUALISM

Never forget that the spiritualists are entirely with us on some most important points. They all hold (*a*) life after death as an actual vivid ever-present certainty, and (*b*) eternal progress and ultimate happiness for everyone, good and bad alike. Now these two items are of such tremendous, such paramount importance—they constitute so enormous an advance from the ordinary orthodox position—that I for one should be well content to join hands with them on such

a platform, and postpone the discussion of the minor points upon which we differ until we have converted the world at large to that much of the truth. I always feel that there is plenty of room for both of us.

People who want to see phenomena, people who cannot believe anything without ocular demonstration, will obtain no satisfaction with us, while from the spiritualists they will get exactly what they want. On the other hand, people who want more philosophy than spiritualism usually provides will naturally gravitate in our direction. Those who admire the average trance-address certainly would not appreciate Theosophy, while those who enjoy Theosophical teaching would never be satisfied with the trance-address. We both cater for the liberal, the open-minded, but for quite different types of them; meantime, we surely need not quarrel.

In what Madame Blavatsky wrote on the subject she laid great stress on the utter uncertainty of the whole thing, and the preponderance of personations over real appearances. My own personal experience has been more favourable than that. I spent some years in experimenting with spiritualism, and I suppose there is hardly a pheno-

menon of which you may read in the books which I have not repeatedly seen. I have encountered many personations, but still in my experience a distinct majority of the apparitions have been genuine, and therefore I am bound to bear testimony to the fact. The messages which they give are often uninteresting, and their religious teaching is usually Christianity and water, but still it is liberal as far as it goes, and anything is an advance upon the bigoted orthodox position.

Not that some spiritualists are not bigoted also—narrow and intolerant as any sectarian—when it comes to discussing (say) the question of reincarnation! The majority of English and American spiritualists do not yet know of that fact, but the French spiritists, the followers of Allan Kardec, hold it, and also the school of Madame d'Espérance in England. Many students wonder that dead people should not all know and recognise the fact of reincarnation; but after all why should they? When a man dies he resorts to the company of those whom he has known on earth; he moves among exactly the same kind of people as during physical life. The average country

grocer is no more likely after death than before it to come into contact with any one who can give him information about reincarnation. Most men are shut in from all new ideas by a host of prejudices; they carry these prejudices into the astral world with them, and are no more amenable to reason and common-sense there than here.

True, a man who is really open-minded can learn a great deal on the astral plane; he may speedily acquaint himself with the whole of the Theosophical teaching, and there are dead men who do this. Therefore it often happens that scraps of Theosophy are found among spirit-communications. We must not forget that there is a higher spiritualism of which the public knows nothing, which never publishes any account of its results. The best circles of all are strictly private—restricted entirely to one family, or to a small number of friends. In such circles the same people meet over and over again, and no outsider is ever admitted to make any change in the magnetism; so the conditions set up are singularly perfect, and the results obtained are of the most surprising character. At public séances, to which any one may be

admitted on payment, an altogether lower class of dead people appear, because of the promiscuous jumble of inharmonious magnetisms.

SYMBOLGY

Symbolgy is a very interesting study. To a certain type of mind everything expresses itself in symbols, and to some people they are of the greatest possible help. I myself do not happen to be of that type, and therefore I have not paid special attention to them or made any particular study of them. Some of them however are obvious, and readily comprehensible to any one who understands even a little of the principles of their interpretation. Think, for example, of those which appear on the earlier pages of *The Book of Dzyan*. On the first page is a white disc, signifying the condition of the unmanifested; on the second page a spot appears in the centre of the white disc, signifying the first manifestation—the First Logos, or the Christ in the bosom of the Father;

on the third page this spot has expanded into a bar, dividing the disc into two halves and so signifying the first great separation into spirit and matter—also the Second Logos, always spoken of as dual or androgynous; on the fourth page another bar has appeared at right angles to the first, giving us the form of a circle divided into four equal parts or quarters, signifying the emergence of the Third Logos, though He is still in a condition of inactivity. On the next page the outer circle falls away, leaving us the equal-armed or Greek cross. This denotes the Third Logos ready for action, just about to descend into the matter of His cosmos.

The next stage of this activity is shown by various forms of the symbol. Sometimes the arms of the Greek cross widen out as they recede from the centre, and then we get the form called the Maltese cross. Another line of symbology retains the straight arms of the Greek cross, but draws a flame shooting out from the end of each arm, to signify the burning light within. A further extension of this idea sets the cross whirling round its centre, like a re-

volving wheel, and when that is done the flames are drawn as streaming backwards as the cross revolves, and in that way we get one of the most universal of all symbols, that of the svastika, which is to be found in every country in the world, and in connection with every religion.

The symbolic meaning of the ordinary Latin cross, as it is used in the Christian Church, has no connection whatever with this line of thought. Its meaning is entirely different, for it symbolises the Second Logos, and His descent into matter, and it is also closely connected with the initiation rites of ancient Egypt. In the case of *The Book of Dzyan* the comprehension of the symbol is enormously assisted by the fact that the book itself is highly magnetised in a peculiar way, so that when the student who is privileged to see it takes one of the pages in his hand a remarkable effect is produced upon him. Before his mind's eye arises the picture of that which the page is intended to symbolise, and simultaneously he hears a sort of recitation of the stanza which describes it. It is very difficult to put this clearly into words, but the experience

is a wonderful one.

I have myself seen and handled the copy which Madame Blavatsky describes—from the study of which she wrote *The Secret Doctrine*. That is of course not the original book, but the copy of it which is kept in the occult museum which is under the care of the Master K. H. The original document is at Shamballa, in the care of the Head of the Hierarchy, and is certainly the oldest book in the world. Indeed it has been said that part of it (the first six stanzas, I think) is even older than the world, for it is said to have been brought over from some previous chain. That most ancient part of it is regarded by some as not merely an account of the processes of the coming into existence of a system, but rather a kind of manual of directions for such an act of creation. Even the copy must be millions of years old.

Another well-known symbol is that of the 'Great Bird,' which is used to denote the Deity in the act of hovering over His universe, brooding over the waters of space, or darting onward along the line of His evolution. To repose between the wings of the Great Bird means so to

meditate as, to realise union with the Logos, and it is said that the man who reaches that level may rest there for untold years.

The word Om is another presentation of the same idea; it is the sacred word of the fifth or Āryan root-race. The Atlantean sacred word was Tau, and it has been said that the sacred words given to the root-races in succession are all of them consecutive syllables of one great word, which is the true sacred Name.

Another obvious symbol, the heart, was prominent in the old Atlantean religion. In the innermost shrine of the great temple in the City of the Golden Gate there lay upon the altar a massive golden box in the shape of a heart, the secret opening of which was known only to the high-priest. This was called 'The Heart of the World,' and signified to them the innermost mysteries that they knew. In it they kept their most sacred things, and much of their symbolism centred around it. They knew that every atom beats as a heart, and they considered that the sun had a similar movement, which they connected with the sun-spot period. Sometimes one comes across passages in their books which give

the impression that they knew more than we do in matters of science, though they regarded it all rather from the poetic than from the scientific point of view. They thought, for example, that the earth breathes and moves, and it is certainly true that quite recently scientific men have discovered that there is a regular daily displacement of the earth's surface, which may be thought of as corresponding in a certain way to breathing.

Another symbol is that of the lotus, and it is used to signify the solar system in its relation to its LOGOS. There is a real reason for this comparison in the actual facts of nature. The seven Planetary LOGOI, although they are great individual entities, are at the same time aspects of the Solar LOGOS, force-centres as it were in His body. Now each of these great living centres or subsidiary LOGOI has a sort of orderly periodic change or motion of his own, corresponding perhaps on some infinitely higher level to the regular beating of the human heart, or to the inspiration and expiration of the breath.

Some of these periodic changes are

more rapid than others, so that a very complicated series of effects is produced, and it has been observed that the movements of the physical planets in their relation to one another furnish a clue to the operation of these great cosmic influences at any given moment. Each of these centres has His special location or major focus within the body of the sun, and has also a minor focus which is always exterior to the sun. The position of this minor focus is always indicated by a physical planet.

The exact relation can hardly be made clear in our three-dimensional phraseology; but we may perhaps put it that each centre has a field of influence practically co-extensive with the solar system; that if a section of the field could be taken it would be found to be elliptical; and that one of the foci of each ellipse would always be in the sun, and the other would be the special planet ruled by that subsidiary Logos. It is probable that, in the gradual condensation of the original glowing nebula from which the system was formed, the location of the planets was determined by the formation of vortices at these minor foci, they being

auxiliary points of distribution—ganglia as it were in the solar system. All the physical planets are included within the portion of the system which is common to all the ovoids; so that any one who tries mentally to construct the figure will see that these revolving ovoids must have their projecting segments, and he will therefore be prepared to understand the comparison of the system as a whole to a flower with many petals.

Another reason for this comparison of the system to a lotus is even more beautiful, but requires deeper thought. As we see them the planets appear as separate globes; but there is in reality a connection between them which is out of reach of our brain-consciousness. Those who have studied the subject of the fourth dimension are familiar with the idea of an extension in a direction invisible to us, but it may not have occurred to them that it is applicable to the solar system as a whole.

We may obtain a suggestion of the facts by holding the hand palm upwards bent so as to form a kind of cup, but with the fingers separated, and then laying a sheet of paper upon the tips of the fingers.

A two-dimensional being living on the plane of that sheet of paper could not possibly be conscious of the hand as a whole, but could perceive only the tiny circles at the points of contact between the fingers and the paper. To him these circles would be entirely unconnected, but we, using the sight of a higher dimension, can see that each of them has a downward expansion, and that in that way they are all parts of a hand. In exactly the same way the man using the sight of the fourth dimension may observe that the planets which are isolated in our three dimensions are all the time joined in another way which we cannot yet see ; and from the point of view of that higher sight these globes are but the points of petals which are part of one great flower. And the glowing heart of that flower throws up a central pistil which appears to us as the sun.

It is not wise for the votary of modern science to ridicule or despise either the learning of old time or the strange and fanciful symbols in which it was expressed, for many of these ancient symbols are pregnant with meaning—often with meaning showing deeper knowledge than the outer world now possesses.

The Theosophical student at least will avoid the mistake of despising anything merely because he does not yet comprehend it—because he has not yet learnt the language in which it is written.

FIRE

On higher planes everything is what down here we should call luminous, and above a certain level everything may be said to be permeated by fire, yet not at all such fire as we know on the physical plane. What we call by that name down here cannot exist without something which either burns or glows, and it is only a kind of reflection or lower expression of a higher abstract thing which we cannot sense. Try to think of a fire which does not burn, but is in a liquid form, something like water. This was known to the followers of the first great Zoroaster, for they had this fire which burned no fuel on their altars, a sacred fire by means of which they symbolised divine life.

One way of reaching the Logos is along the line of fire, and the ancient Parsis knew

this well, and raised themselves until they were one with the fire, so as to reach Him by way of it. The only way in which it can be done is through the assistance of certain classes of devas, but at this period of the world's history we are so grossly material that very few can stand the ordeal. The first Zoroaster had around him many who were able to take that way; and, though under present conditions our lower vehicles would probably be destroyed if we should make such an attempt, in new races and on other planets we shall be able to take that way again. All this sounds strange and weird and incomprehensible, because it deals with conditions which are utterly unknown on the physical plane, but the student of occultism will find that in the course of his progress he has to face many things which cannot at all be expressed in words down here.

Third Section

The Theosophical Attitude

THIRD SECTION

COMMON-SENSE

Above all things and under all circumstances the student of occultism must hold fast to common-sense. He will meet with many new ideas, with many startling facts, and, if he allows the strangeness of things to overbalance him, harm instead of good will result from the increase of his knowledge. Many other qualities are desirable for progress, but a well-balanced mind is an actual necessity. The study of occultism may indeed be summed up in this: it is the study of much that is unrecognised by the ordinary man—the acquisition therefore of a great multitude of new facts, and then the adaptation of one's life to the new facts in a reasonable and common-sense way. All occultism of which I know anything is simply an apotheosis of common-sense.

BROTHERHOOD

The brotherhood of man is a fact in nature; those who deny it are simply those who are blind to it, because they shut their eyes to actualities which they do not wish to acknowledge. We need waste little time over those who deny it; nature itself will refute their heresy. More subtly dangerous are those who misunderstand it, and their name is legion.

Remember not only what brotherhood means, but also what it does not mean. It emphatically does not mean equality, for twins and triplets are comparatively rare; under all but the most abnormal circumstances, brotherhood implies a difference in age, and consequently all sorts of other differences, in strength, in cleverness, in capacity.

Brotherhood implies community of interest, but not community of interests. If the family be rich all its members profit thereby; if the family be poor, all its members suffer accordingly. So there is a community of interest. But the individual interests of the brothers not only may be, but also for many years must be, absolutely different. What

interests has the boy of fourteen in common with his brother of six? Each lives his own life among friends of his own age, and has far more in common with them than with his brother. What cares the elder brother of twenty-five, fighting his way in the world, for all the prizes and anxieties of school-life which fill the horizon of that second brother?

It is not to be expected, then, that because they are brothers men shall feel alike or be interested in the same things. It would not be desirable, even if it were possible, for their duties differ according to their ages, and the one thing which most promotes the evolution of the human family as a whole is that every man should strive earnestly to do his duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call him, as the Church catechism puts it. This does not in the least imply that every man must always remain in the station in which his karma has placed him at birth; if he can honestly and harmlessly make such further karma as will raise him out of it he is at perfect liberty to do so. But at whatever stage he may be, he should do the duties of that stage.

The child grows steadily; but while he is at a certain age, his duties are those appropriate to that age, and not those of some older brother. Each age has its duties—the younger to learn and to serve, and the older to direct and protect; but all alike to be loving and helpful, all alike to try to realise the idea of the great family of humanity. Each will best help his brothers, not by interfering with them, but by trying earnestly to do his own duty as a member of this family.

The brotherhood of our Society ought to be a very real thing. It is important that we should recognise and realise a close fellowship, a feeling of real unity and drawing together. This will be achieved if members will forget their own personal feelings and think chiefly of the interests of others. The heart of the Society is making for itself a body on the buddhic plane, a channel through which the Great Ones can work. The perfection of the channel as such depends upon the attitude of the earnest and devoted members. As yet it is very imperfect, because of the tendency of each member to think too much of himself as a unit, and too little of the good

and well-being of the whole. The stones of the wall must be built each in its own place; one standing out of place here, or projecting there, causes roughness, and the wall as a whole is a less perfect wall. We form but a little part of a vast scheme, one wheel as it were of a machine. It is for us to make ourselves really fit for our little part; if we do that, though we may be quite unfit to take a leading position in the drama of the world, yet what little we do is well done and lasting, and will honourably fill its place in the greater whole.

You are all aware that in seven hundred years' time our two Masters will commence the founding of the sixth root-race, and that even already They are looking about for those who will be suitable assistants for Them in that work. But there is something nearer than that to be done—and it is a work which will afford excellent practice in developing the qualities necessary for that larger work; and this is the development of the sixth sub-race of the Āryan race, which is now just beginning to be formed in North America. Already signs are to be seen of the preparations for

this work ; different races are being welded together in one ; and we too have our part to play in this. We all recognise how important it is that a child's early years should be surrounded by good influences, and it is just the same with the childhood of a race. If we can succeed in starting this young race along right lines much will be gained ; and we, even at this distance from America, can be of great help at this critical period of history, if we will.

Part of the scheme very shortly to be realised is the drawing together of the various branches of our fifth sub-race, the Teutonic. Many of us belong to that—the English colonies, the Americans, the Scandinavians, the Dutch and the Germans ; and many also in France and Italy, as for example the Normans, who are the descendants of the Norsemen, and also those in southern countries who are descendants of the Goths and Visigoths. What is desired in order to promote the work of the great plan is that all these races should be drawn into much closer sympathy. This has already been achieved to a great extent in the case of

England and America; it is very much to be regretted that it cannot be done in the case of Germany also, but for the present that great country seems disposed to hold aloof from the desired coalition, and to stand out for what it considers its own private interests. It is much to be hoped that this difficulty may be overcome.

The great purpose of this drawing together is to prepare the way for the coming of the new Messiah, or, as we should say in Theosophical circles, the next advent of the Lord Maitreya, as a great spiritual teacher, bringing a new religion. The time is rapidly approaching when this shall be launched—a teaching which shall unify the other religions, and compared with them shall stand upon a broader basis and keep its purity longer. But before this can come about we must have got rid of the incubus of war, which at present is always hanging over our heads like a great spectre, paralysing the best intellects of all countries as regards social experiments, making it impossible for our statesmen to try new plans and methods on a large scale. Therefore one essential towards carrying out the scheme is a period of universal peace. Many

efforts have already been made in various ways to bring about this result—for example the Peace Conference; but it seems that some other way will have to be tried.

If we of the fifth sub-race can but put aside our prejudices and stand side by side, a great work lies before us in the future. Ours is the latest sub-race, and therefore contains, generally speaking, the highest egos in evolution. Yet the majority of the people in it are by no means ready to respond to a purely unselfish motive as a means of bringing about the universal peace required.

How then can this best be attained? By making it to the interest of all these nations to insist upon universal peace. Remember that trade suffers during war. We of these various branches of the Teutonic race are the greatest trading nations of the world, and I hope that we may shortly realise that it is to our interest to bind ourselves together, and to stand for peace. Truly this is not a very high motive, for it is merely self-interest; but still when the rulers and great statesmen are moved to desire unity from the abstract love for humanity, this lower motive may help to bring their less

developed fellow-countrymen into line with them, and cause them warmly to support any movement which they may set on foot for that object.

All sorts of events are being utilised to help this binding together of our race. For example, the death of Her Majesty the late Queen Victoria was very decidedly utilised for that purpose. Her life did very much in drawing the Colonies together into closer bonds with the Mother-country. Those who saw the Jubilee procession from the psychic standpoint were greatly impressed with the mighty current of high emotion thereby evoked. In her life she did much, but at her death still more was accomplished. By her death she drew close not only our Colonies, but also the United States. I was in America at the time of her death, and really it might have been their own ruler for whom the Americans were mourning, so spontaneous and so sincere were their expressions of the sense of loss. So in her death the great Queen did grand service, as well as in her life.

Each race has its own peculiarities, just as each individual has. If we wish to co-

operate in the great work we must learn to allow for these, to be tolerant of them, and to regard them with a kindly interest, instead of sneering at them or letting them get on our nerves. What then can we do practically to help these great national affairs? This at least: that when in our presence unkind or sneering remarks are made about other nations, we can make a point of always putting forward considerations on the other side, and saying something kindly. We may not always be able to contradict the evil thing said, but at least we may supplement it with something that is good.

There are perhaps but few of us, but at least in the course of a year each of us probably meets at least a thousand others, and each of us may to that extent be a centre for helping our own nation to see good in others, and thus, though it may be only in a small way, we may be able to smooth the path and to make the way for union easier. Many people are constantly in the habit of speaking with narrow prejudice against the peculiarities of other nations; let us at least take care not to do this, but always bear in mind the

importance of promoting friendly feeling. Do not let us despair when we think how little each one of us can do in the matter; let us rather remember that every little effort will be used by Those who are working from behind. No doubt the scheme will be carried out whether or not we take the privilege which is offered to us of helping in it; but that is no reason why we should not do our best.

Nor is it only good people who are used in the promotion of the scheme. All sorts of forces are being used by the Great Brotherhood that stands behind to forward the necessary work. Yes, even the very selfishness and the failings of men. "Blindly the wicked work the righteous will of heaven," as Southey writes in *Thalaba*. And "All things work together for good to them that love God." This was spoken as regards personal karma, but the same thing holds good in regard to greater and broader schemes. For example, the bigotry of the Christian Church, evil though it is, has not been altogether valueless, for it has helped to develop strength of faith, since the ignorant cannot believe strongly without being bigoted. Self-seeking

in commercial pursuits is evil also, yet it has in it a certain power which can be turned to account by those who stand behind, for it developes strength of will and concentration, qualities which in a future life may be put to most valuable uses.

We each have an opportunity to help in this scheme, to co-operate on the side of good. If we do not take the opportunity offered to us, another will, and if not that other, then another, but in any case the work will be done.

We know that already some to whom the opportunity has been offered have cast it aside; but that is only all the more reason why we should work with greater vigour, so as to atone for their defection—to do their share as well as our own. Never for a moment must we fear that because of such defection the work will be allowed to suffer. We cannot but regret that our poor friends should lose their opportunities—that from ignorance and lack of clear-sightedness they are working so sadly against their own interests. Yet remember that their folly is but temporary; they will awaken to the truth some day—if not in this life,

then in some other. Meantime inside all is well, and the Great Work is going forward.

The evolution of the world is, after all, like any other large undertaking. Think of the making of a railway, for instance. It does not matter to the railway company or to the future passengers which workman lays a certain rail or drives a certain bolt, so long as it is well and truly done; and the overseer will attend to that. It matters very much to the *workman*, for he who works receives the pay, while the other gets nothing. The overseer regrets it when a workman goes off in a fit of temper or of drunkenness and refuses to work for a day; but he thinks, "Never mind, he will come back tomorrow," and meantime he employs some one else. Many have left the work in just that way in an outburst of personality, but they will return. The question is not as to whether the work shall be done—the Masters will see to that in any case; it is only as to who will embrace the opportunity of doing it.

Many people who contend bitterly against the right are merely showing that they are not yet fit to pass this test; they have not yet reached the stage where they can forget

themselves utterly in the work; their personalities are still rampant, and so they are capable of being shocked and thrown off their balance, if some new fact comes before them. It is sad, of course, but it is only temporary; they have lost a good opportunity for this life, because they are not yet strong enough for it; but there are many lives yet to come. Meantime others will take their places. Never forget that the one thing of importance is that the Masters' work should be done; let us at least be among those who are doing it now, even though there are many who cannot yet see clearly enough to help us. They repudiate the Masters for this life, like a naughty little boy who gets angry with his parents, and in a fit of passion runs away and hides himself; but presently hunger brings the naughty little boy home again, and in the same way hunger for the truth which they have once tasted will bring most of them back to the feet of the Masters in their next lives. Meantime let us stand firm, and fill our hearts with peace even in the midst of strife. •

If we would rise to our opportunity we must rub down our corners and get rid of

our awkward personalities, and forget them in encouraging good feeling in every possible way. If we hear something said against somebody else let us at once try to put the other side, and this both with regard to nations and individuals. Counterbalance the evil by speaking the good—not to give a false impression, but to give the best possible aspect or interpretation of the facts. Our work is to make the machine run smoothly, and to neutralise the friction. Our aim is to be a united whole as a Society, and to help towards harmony in the outside world. The scheme is great, the opportunity glorious; shall we take it?

Yet beware lest you should make the idea of preparing yourself for grand work in the future an excuse for neglecting the minor opportunities of every-day life. A good example of what I mean is offered by a letter which I recently received, in which the writer says that he finds himself in the position of having to teach a Theosophical Branch, and that he feels it a great responsibility, of which he cannot think himself worthy because his knowledge is at present so imperfect. Now in reply to this I shall say:

Do not be in the least troubled about your position towards your Branch. Assuredly it is a responsibility to teach, but on the other hand it is a very great privilege. Think of it rather in this way, that here are a number of hungry souls, and Those who stand behind have been so kind to you as to give you the opportunity of being the channel through which these can be fed. You have the broad principles of the teaching clearly in mind, and your own common-sense will keep you from going far wrong in details. I admire your extreme conscientiousness, but if you keep these main principles steadily before your pupils, you are very little likely to go wrong in your teaching.

We all have the responsibility of which you speak, and those of us who have to write the books and give the lectures feel it far more acutely than you can imagine. Indeed we have sometimes been told by friends that we ought to have attained adeptship before we wrote any books, so that it might be quite certain that there should be no mistakes in them. I can only say that we decided to share our imperfect knowledge with our brothers,

even while we still had very much to acquire ; and I think that the result has justified our decision. If we had waited until we attained adeptship, it is true that our books would have been perfect—and they are very far from being perfect now—but then you see you would all have had to wait a thousand years or so for them, which would have made a considerable difference to the work of the Society in the present century. It seems to me that the problem that lies before you is an exactly similar one. You also might refrain from teaching until you knew everything ; but what would become of your Branch in the meantime ?

HELPING THE WORLD

One of the first qualifications which are required for the treading of the Path is single-mindedness or one-pointedness. Even worldly men succeed because they are one-pointed, and we can learn from them the value of determination on our own line. Our goal is not so tangible as theirs, so we

have more difficulty in keeping the one-pointed attitude of mind; but in India the importance of the unseen is more easily realised than in the West. It is good to seek the company of those who are more advanced, to whom the realities of the Path are constantly present; also to read and hear and think about our purpose frequently, and unwaveringly to practise the virtues by which alone the perfect knowledge can come to us.

This is an age of hurry and scurry; the tendency is for people to do a little of many things, but nothing thoroughly—to flutter from one thing to another. No man now devotes his life to a masterpiece, as was so often done in the Middle Ages in Europe, or in old days in India.

Occultism changes a man's life in many ways, but in none more than in this; it makes him absolutely one-pointed. Of course I do not mean that it causes him to neglect any duty that he used to do; on the contrary, the never-ceasing watch to fulfil every duty is its first prescription. But it gives him a key-note of life which is always sounding in his ears, which he never forgets for an instant—the key-

note of helpfulness. Why? Because he learns what is the plan of the Logos, and tries to co-operate in it.

This involves many lines of action. To be able to help effectively he must make himself fit to help; hence he must undertake the most careful self-training, the elimination of evil qualities from himself, the development of good ones. Also he must maintain a constant watchfulness for opportunities to help.

One special method of helping the world lies ready to the hand of members of our Society—that of spreading Theosophic truth. We have no right and no desire to force our ideas on any one, but it is our duty and our privilege to give people the opportunity of knowing the real explanation of the problems of life. If when the water of life is offered, a man will not drink, that is his own affair; but at least we should see that none perishes through ignorance of the existence of that water.

We have then this duty of spreading the truth, and nothing should be allowed to interfere with it. This is the work that as a Society we have to do, and we must remember that the duty is binding upon

each one of us. Our minds must be filled with it, we must be constantly thinking and planning for it, seizing every opportunity that offers. It is not for us to excuse ourselves because some other member seems to be doing nothing; that is his business, and we are in no way concerned in it; but if we ourselves neglect to do our very best, we are failing in our duty. It was not to illumine our own path only that this glorious light came to us, but that we also in our turn might be light-bearers to our suffering brothers.

CRITICISM

If we wish to make any progress in occultism, we *must* learn to mind our own business and let other people alone. They have their reasons and their lines of thought which we do not understand. To their own Master they stand or fall. Once more, we have our work to do, and we decline to be diverted from it. We *must* learn charity and tolerance, and repress the mad desire to be always finding fault with some one else.

It is a mad desire, and it dominates modern life—this spirit of criticism. Every one wants to interfere with somebody else's duty, instead of attending to his own; every one thinks he can do the other man's work better than it is being done. We see it in politics, in religion, in social life. For example, the obvious duty of a Government is to govern, and the duty of its people is to be good citizens and to make that work of government easy and effective. But in these days people are so eager to teach their Governments how to govern that they forget all about their own primary duty of being good citizens. Men will not realise that if they will but do their duties, karma will look after the 'rights' about which they are so clamorous.

How comes this spirit of criticism to be so general and so savage at this stage of the world's history? Like most other evils, it is the excess of a good and necessary quality. In the course of evolution we have arrived at the fifth sub-race of the fifth root-race. I mean that that race is the latest yet developed, that its spirit is dominant in the world just now, and that even those who do not belong to it are

necessarily much influenced by that spirit.

Now each race has its own special lessons to learn, its own special quality to unfold. The quality of the fifth-race is what is sometimes called *manas*—the type of intellect that discriminates, that notes the *differences* between things. When it is perfectly developed, men will note these differences calmly, solely for the purpose of understanding them and judging which is best. But now, in this stage of half-development most people look for differences from their own point of view *not* in order to *understand* them but in order to *oppose* them—often violently to persecute them. It is simply the point of view of the ignorant and unevolved man, who is full of intolerance and self-conceit, absolutely sure that he is right (perhaps he may be up to a certain point) and that everybody else therefore must be entirely wrong—which does not follow. Remember what Oliver Cromwell said to his council: “Brethren, I beseech you in the sacred name of the Christ to think it possible that you may sometimes mistake!”

We too must develop the critical faculty ; but we should criticise *ourselves*, not others.

There are always two sides to every question; generally more than two. *Kritein* means to judge; therefore, criticism is useless and can only do harm unless it is absolutely calm and judicial. It is not a mad attack upon an opponent, but a quiet unprejudiced weighing of reasons for and against a certain opinion or a certain course of action. We may decide in one way, but we *must* recognise that another man of equal intellect may emphasise another aspect of the question, and therefore, decide quite otherwise. And yet in so deciding he may be just as good, just as wise, just as honest as we ourselves.

Yet how few recognise that; how few rabid protestants really believe Catholics to be good men; how few convinced red-hot radicals really believe that an old Tory squire may be just as good and earnest a man as themselves, trying honestly to do what he thinks his duty!

If a man comes to a decision different from our own we need not pretend to agree with him, but we must give him credit for good intentions. One of the worst features of modern life* is its eager readiness to believe evil—its habit of deliberately seeking out

the worst conceivable construction that can be put upon everything. And this attitude is surely at its very worst when adopted towards those who have helped us, to whom we owe thanks for knowledge or inspiration received. Remember the words of the Master: "Ingratitude is not one of our vices." It is always a mistake to rush madly into criticism of those who know more than we; it is more seemly to wait and think matters over, to wait and see what the future brings forth. Apply the test of time and result; "By their fruits ye shall know them." Let us make a rule to think the best of every man; let us do our work and leave others free to do theirs.

PREJUDICE

Beware of the beginnings of suspicion: it will distort everything. I have seen it come between friends and noticed how a little suspicion soon grows into a giant misunderstanding. Every harmless word is distorted, and mistaken to be the expression

of some unkind or improper motive, while all the time the speaker is utterly unconscious of the suspicion. It is the same when opinions differ about books or religion; a slight difference of opinion is fostered by dwelling upon all that tells on one's own side and against the other side, until the result is an absurdly distorted view. One finds it again with colour prejudice, although those now wearing white bodies have worn brown ones and *vice versa*, and the habits of one have been or will be the habits of the other. Brotherhood means the getting rid of prejudices; knowledge of the fact of reincarnation ought to help us to overcome our limitations and uncharitableness.

We who are students of the higher life *must* rise above these prejudices. It is a difficult task, because they are ingrained—prejudices of race, of caste, of religion; but they *must* all be rooted out, because they prevent clear sight and true judgment. They are like coloured glass—still more like cheap, imperfect glass; everything seen through them is distorted, often so much so as to look entirely different from what it really is. Before we can judge and

discriminate we *must* see clearly.

It is always very easy to attribute some evil motive to others whom we have allowed ourselves to dislike, and to discover some evil explanation for their acts. This tendency forms a very serious impediment in the path of progress. We must tear away our own personalities, for only then shall we be at all able to see the other person as he is. A prejudice is a kind of wart upon the mental body, and of course when a man tries to look out through that particular part of the body he cannot see clearly. It is in reality a congested spot in the mental body, a point at which the matter is no longer living and flowing, but is stagnant and rotten. The way to cure it is to acquire more knowledge, to get the matter of the mental body into motion, and then one by one the prejudices will be washed away and dissolved.

This evil effect of prejudice was what Āryasangha meant when he said, in *The Voice of the Silence*, that the mind was the great slayer of the real. By that he was drawing attention to the fact that we do not see any object as it is. We see only the images that we are able to make of it,

and everything is necessarily coloured for us by these thought-forms of our own creation. Notice how two persons with pre-conceived ideas, seeing the same set of circumstances, and agreeing as to the actual happenings, will yet make two totally different stories from them. Exactly this sort of thing is going on all the time with every ordinary man, and we do not realise how absurdly we distort things.

The duty of the Theosophical student is to learn to see things as they are, and this means control, vigilance and a very great deal of hard work. In the West, for example, people are very much prejudiced along religious lines, for we are born into a certain religion and sedulously taught that all others are superstitions. Our ideas therefore are biased from the first, and even when we do learn to know a little about other religions and respect them it would be difficult for us to imagine ourselves born into them. Those who are Hindūs can scarcely think of themselves as being born as Christians or Muhammadans, and just in the same way the Christian or Muhammadan has an equal difficulty in thinking of himself as a Hindū or a Buddhist, although

it is practically certain that in some past life he has been in one or other of these religions.

Many so-called protestant Christians will not even now trust a Roman Catholic, and the more ignorant people are, the greater is their distrust of that to which they are unaccustomed. The peasantry, for example, have an instinctive distrust of all foreigners, and there are many country places in England where, let us say, a Frenchman, unless in poverty and needing help, would certainly be regarded with suspicion. If he is hungry he will be fed, and treated with compassion; but let him come as a fellow-workman and all that he does will be criticised, laughed at, and suspected. Now of course all this comes from ignorance, and occurs because the peasantry are unaccustomed to meeting with foreigners.

The removal of such prejudice is one of the great advantages gained by an intelligent man when he travels. In the Theosophical Society men of different nations are being drawn much more closely together; Indians are learning to trust white people, and white people in turn are learning that Indians are much the same as them-

selves. I was working in Amsterdam during the Boer war, and though in Holland generally there was a strong feeling at the time against England, there was never the slightest trace of it among the Dutch Theosophical members. It is most interesting to attend one of the European Theosophical Conferences, and to see the really hearty good feeling which exists between men of different nations—how unfeignedly glad they are to see one another, and how they rejoice in one another's company. One sees at once that if such fellow-feeling as exists between the members of the Theosophical Society could only spread to a majority of their fellow-countrymen in the various nations, war would at once become a ridiculous impossibility.

As things are now we form opinions on very slight grounds; you meet a person for the first time, and something that he says, or some trivial gesture, arouses in you a little dislike of him, so that there is a slight wall between you and him. This may seem an unimportant matter, yet if you are not careful that slight bias against the person will grow into a barrier which will for ever prevent you from under-

standing him. To a certain extent you see him through this thought-form that you have made, and you cannot see him correctly, for it is like looking through a twisted and coloured glass which distorts everything.

Sometimes, but not so often, a prejudice is in favour of the person, as in the case of a mother who can see no harm in what her child does, even though he may seriously harm others. Now whether they be against a person or in favour of him, both of these are equally prejudices, mental delusions which slay the real. The best way to see truly is to begin determinedly to look always for the good in every one, as our prejudices are generally on the other side, and we are sadly prone to see evil where none exists. We differ from other people in colour, in dress, in manners and customs, and in outer forms of religion, but all these are merely externals, and all that goes to make up the real man behind and beneath all this is much the same in us all.

It is not after all so difficult to learn to look behind the outer shells in which people conceal themselves. Thereby

they usually make the worst of themselves, for the main faults nearly always lie on the surface, and the real gold is often successfully concealed. One who aspires to make progress must overcome this blindness to the worth of others, this tendency to judge by surface characteristics.

Remember that no one who desires to stand on the side of good as against evil can ever be refused the opportunity, no matter how ignorant or bigoted he may be. The Masters always take the good and use it wherever it appears, even if there is in the same man much that is bad also; and Their use of this force for good greatly helps the man who has generated it. For example, They will use the devotional force which is to be found even in a murderous fanatic, and thus They will allow him to do some good work and consequently to be helped.

We also should imitate the Great Ones; we should always try to take the good in everything and everybody. Do not look for and accentuate the evil in anyone, but select and emphasise the good. Go on doing your own work to the best of your ability, and do not trouble yourself about

the work of another, or about how he is doing it. Even if other people make difficulties in your way, climb over them and do not worry; they are your karma, and after all these things from outside do not really matter. Do not make the mistake of thinking that others are trying to thwart your good purposes. All these people are much like yourself; think of it—would you deliberately choose to do a wicked thing like that?

CURIOSITY

Be so centred in your work that you have no time to find fault with others, or to pry into their affairs. If only each man would mind his own business the world would be infinitely happier.

This prying into other people's affairs works much of evil, and it is quite accurate to say that the person who does it is suffering from a disease. The man who is prying is not usually doing it for the purpose of helping, but simply to satisfy his curiosity about something which does

not concern him, which is symptomatic of his disease. Another symptom is that the man cannot keep to himself the information which he has so nefariously acquired, but must everlastingly be pouring it out to others as foolish and as wicked as himself. For it is wicked beyond all doubt, this gossip—one of the wickedest things in the world. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred what is said is an absolute fabrication, but it does an enormous amount of harm.

It is not only the damage done to another person's reputation; that is the least part of the evil. The gossip and his pestilential cronies perpetually make thought-forms of some evil quality which they choose to attribute to their victim, and then proceed to hurl them upon him in an unceasing stream. The natural effect of this will be to awaken in him the evil quality of which they accuse him, if there is anything at all in his nature which will respond to their malicious efforts. In the one case out of a hundred in which there is some truth in their spiteful prattle, their thought-forms intensify the evil, and so they pile up for themselves a store of the terrible karma which comes from leading a brother into

sin. Theosophists especially should be careful to avoid these evils, because many of them are making some effort in the direction of developing psychic powers, and if they should use those for the purpose of prying into other people's affairs or for sending evil thoughts to them, their karma would be of the most terrible nature.

Never speak unless you know, and not even then unless you are absolutely certain that some definite good will come of it. Before you speak ask yourself about what you are going to say: "Is it true? Is it kind? Is it useful?" And unless you can answer these three questions in the affirmative, your duty is to remain silent. I am well aware that an absolute following of this rule would reduce the conversation of the world by about ninety per cent, but that would be an unspeakable advantage, and the world would advance much more rapidly.

When we understand the underlying unity of all we cannot be otherwise than helpful, we cannot stand aside from our brother's sorrow. Of course there may be many cases where physical aid is impossible, but at least we can always give the help of sympathy,

compassion and love, and this is clearly our duty. For a man who realises Theosophy harshness is impossible. Any member who acts roughly or coarsely is failing in his Theosophy, and if he fails in patience he is failing in comprehension. To understand all is to forgive all, to love all. Every man has his own point of view, and the shortest road for one man is not by any means necessarily the best for another. Every man has a perfect right to take his own evolution in hand in his own way, and to do with regard to it what he chooses, so long as he does not cause suffering or inconvenience to anyone else. It is emphatically not our business to try to put everybody right, but only to see that all is right on our side in our relations with others. Before we undertake an effort to force someone else into our path it will be best for us carefully to examine *his*, for it may be better for him. We ought to be always ready to help freely to the fullest extent of our power, but we ought never to interfere.

KNOW THYSELF

The old Greek saying *Gnothi seauton*, know thyself, is a fine piece of advice, and self-knowledge is absolutely necessary to any candidate for progress. And yet we must beware lest our necessary self-examination should degenerate into morbid introspection, as it often does with some of the best of our students. Many people are constantly worrying themselves lest unawares they should be 'sliding back,' as they call it. If they understood the method of evolution a little better they would see that no one can slide back when the whole current is moving steadily forward.

As a torrent comes rushing down a slope, many little eddies are formed behind rocks, or perhaps where the water is whirling round and round, and therefore for the moment some of it is moving backwards; but yet the whole body of water, eddies and all, is being swept on in the rush of the torrent, so that even that which is apparently moving backwards in relation to the rest of the stream is really being hurried forward along with the rest.

Even the people who are doing nothing towards their evolution, and let everything go as it will, are all the while gradually evolving, because of the irresistible force of the Logos which is steadily pressing them onwards; but they are moving so slowly that it will take them millions of years of incarnation and trouble and uselessness to gain even a step.

The method in which this is managed is delightfully simple and ingenious. All the evil qualities in man are vibrations of the lower matter of the respective planes. In the astral body, for example, selfishness, anger, hatred, jealousy, sensuality, and all qualities of this kind are invariably expressed by vibrations of the lower type of astral matter, while love, devotion, sympathy, and emotions of that class are expressed only in matter of the three higher sub-planes. From this flow two remarkable results. It must be borne in mind that each sub-plane of the astral vehicle has a special relation to the corresponding sub-plane in the mental body; or, to put it more accurately, the four lower sub-planes of the astral correspond to the four kinds of matter in the mental

body, while the three higher correspond to the causal vehicle.

Therefore it will be seen that only higher qualities can be built into the causal body, since the vibrations created by the lower can find in it no matter which is capable of responding to them. Thence it emerges that while any good which the man develops within himself records itself permanently by a change in his causal body, the evil which he does and thinks and feels cannot possibly touch the real ego, but can only cause disturbance and trouble to the mental body, which is renewed for each fresh incarnation. Of course the result of this evil does store itself in the mental and astral permanent atoms, and so the man has to face it over and over again, but that is a very different matter from taking it into the ego and making it really a part of himself.

The second remarkable result produced is that a certain amount of force directed towards good produces an enormously greater effect in proportion than the same amount of force directed towards evil. If a man throws a certain amount of energy into

some evil quality it has to express itself through the lower and heavier astral matter; and while any kind of astral matter is exceedingly subtle as compared with anything on the physical plane, yet as compared with the higher matter of its own plane it is just as gross as lead is on the physical plane when compared with the finest ether.

If therefore a man should exert exactly the same amount of force in the direction of good, it would have to move through the much finer matter of these higher sub-planes and would produce at least a hundred times as much effect, or if we compare the lowest with the highest, probably more than a thousand times. Remember that even in addition to what has been said as to the effect of force in different grades of matter, we have the other great fact that the Logos Himself is by His resistless power steadily pressing the whole system onwards and upwards, and that, however slow this cyclic progression may seem to us, it is a fact which cannot be neglected, for its effect is that a man who accurately balances his good and evil comes back, not to the same actual position,

but to the same relative position, and therefore even he has made some slight advance, and is as it were in a position just a little better than that which he has actually deserved and made for himself.

It will be clear from these considerations that, if any one is so foolish as to want to get really backwards against the stream, he will have to work hard and definitely towards evil; there is no fear of 'sliding' back. That is one of the old delusions which remains from the times of the belief in the orthodox devil, who was so much stronger than God that everything in the world was working in his favour. Really the exact opposite is the case, and everything round a man is calculated to assist him, if he only understands it.

So many of our most conscientious people are just like the child who has a little garden of his own, and constantly pulls up his plants to see how the roots are growing—with the result of course that nothing grows at all. We must learn not to think of ourselves personally, nor of our personal progress, but enter the path of development, go on working for others to the best of our ability, and trust our progress to take

care of itself. The more a scientist thinks about himself the less mental energy he has for the problems of science; the more a devotee thinks about himself the less devotion has he to lavish upon his object.

Some self-examination is necessary, but it is a fatal mistake to spend too much time in self-examination; it is like spending all one's time in oiling and tinkering at the machinery. We use what faculties we have, and in the use of them others will develop, and true progress will be made. If you are learning a language, for example, it is a mistake to try to learn it from books quite perfectly before you make any attempt to speak it; you must plunge into it, and make mistakes in it, and in the effort you will learn in due course to speak without mistake. So in the course of time what is called renunciation will come naturally, and even easily. No doubt when men first attempt to live the higher life they do definitely renounce many things which are pleasures to others—which still have a strong attraction even for them; but soon the man finds that the attraction of such pleasures has ceased, and that he has

neither time nor inclination for the lower enjoyments.

Learn above all things not to worry. Be happy, and make the best of everything. Try to raise yourself and help others. Contentment is not incompatible with aspiration. Optimism is justified by the certainty of the ultimate triumph of good, though if we take only the physical plane into account it is not easy to maintain that position. One's attitude in this matter depends chiefly upon the level at which one habitually keeps one's consciousness. If it is centred chiefly in the physical plane one sees little but the misery, but when it becomes possible to centre it at a higher level the joy beyond always shines through. I know the BUDDHA said that life was misery, and it is quite true on the whole with regard to the manifested life down here, yet the Greeks and Egyptians managed to extract much joy even from this lower life by taking it from the philosophical point of view.

We never lose anything by making the best of things, but gain very much in happiness and in the power of making others happy. As our sympathy and our love grow we shall be able to receive

within ourselves all the streams of emotion and of thought which come to us from others, and yet we shall remain within ourselves unaffected, calm and joyous, like the great ocean which receives the waters of many rivers and yet remains always in equilibrium.

The inner life of an aspirant ought not to be one of continual oscillation. Outer moods change constantly because they are affected by all sorts of outside influences. If you find yourself depressed, it may be due to any one of half-a-dozen reasons, none of them of any real importance. The physical body is a fertile source of such ills; a trifling indigestion, a slight congestion in the circulation, or a little over-fatigue may account for many conditions which *feel* quite serious. Even more frequently depression is caused by the presence of some astral entity who is himself depressed, and is hovering round you either in search of sympathy or in the hope of drawing from you the vitality which he lacks. We must simply learn to disregard depression altogether—to throw it off as a sin and a crime against our neighbours, which it really is; but, anyhow, whether we can succeed fully in dispersing

its clouds or not we must learn simply to go on as though it were not there.

Your mind is your own mind, into which you should allow entrance only to such thoughts as you, the ego, choose. Your astral body is also your own, and you should not allow in it any sensations except those which are good for the higher self. So you must manage these vibrations of depression, and absolutely decline to give harbourage to them. They must not be allowed to impinge upon you. If they do so impinge they must not be permitted to effect a lodgment. If, to some slight extent, in spite of your efforts, they do hang about you, then it is your duty to ignore them and to let no one else know that they even exist.

Sometimes people tell me they have had moments of splendid inspiration and exaltation, and glowing devotion and joy. They do not realise that these are precisely the moments when the higher self succeeds in impressing himself upon the lower, and that all that which they feel is *there all the time*, but the lower self is not always conscious of it. Realise by reason and by faith that it is always there, and it becomes as though

we felt it, even in the time when the link is imperfect and down here we feel it not.

But many a man, while admitting the truth of this in the abstract, yet says that he cannot perpetually feel this happiness because of his own defects and constant failures. His attitude in fact is very much that adopted in the litany: "Have mercy upon us miserable sinners." Now we are all sinners in the sense that we all fall short of what we ought to do, and constantly do what we ought not to do, but there is no need to aggravate the offence by being *miserable* sinners. A miserable person is a public nuisance, because he is a centre of infection, and is spreading misery and sorrow all round upon his unfortunate neighbours—a thing which no man has a right to do. Any man with just the same feelings, who contrives to keep himself reasonably happy even while making determined efforts for reform, is not injuring others in at all the same way.

People who think and speak of themselves as miserable worms are going exactly the right way to make themselves miserable worms, for what a man thinks, that he is.

All such talk is usually hypocrisy, as you may easily see from the fact that the man who so readily calls himself a miserable worm in church would feel distinctly insulted if anybody else called him so in ordinary daily life. And whether it is hypocritical or not it is certainly nonsense, for we passed the reptilian stage of evolution long ago, if we ever were in it. Anyone who understands at all the influence of thought will realise that a man who really thinks himself a miserable worm has already deprived himself of any power of rising out of that state, while the man who realises strongly that he is a spark of the divine life will feel ever hopeful and joyous, because in essence the divine is always joy. It is a great mistake to waste time in repentance; what is past is past, and no amount of remorse can undo it. As one of our own Masters once said, "The only repentance that is worth anything whatever is the resolve not to do it again."

ASCETICISM

Some mistaken ideas seem prevalent among our members upon the subject of asceticism,

and it may be worth while to consider what it really is, and how far it may be useful. The word is usually taken to signify a life of austerities and of mortification of the body, though this is somewhat of a departure from the original meaning of the Greek word *asketes*, which is simply one who exercises himself as an athlete does. But ecclesiasticism impounded the word and changed its sense, applying it to the practice of all sorts of self-denial for the purpose of spiritual progress, on the theory that the bodily nature with its passions and desires is the stronghold of the evil inherent in man since the fall of Adam, and that it must therefore be suppressed by fasting and penance. In the grander Oriental religions we sometimes encounter a similar idea, based on the conception of matter as essentially evil, and following from that the deduction that an approach to ideal good or an escape from the miseries of existence can be effected only by subduing or torturing the body.

The student of Theosophy will at once see that in both these theories there is dire confusion of thought. There is no evil inherent in man except such as he has him-

self generated in previous births; nor is matter essentially evil, since it is just as much divine as is spirit, and without it all manifestation of the Deity would be impossible. The body and its desires are not in themselves evil or good, but it is true that before real progress can be made they must be brought under the control of the higher self within. To torture the body is foolish; to govern it is necessary. "The men who perform severe austerities . . . unintelligent, tormenting the aggregated elements forming the body, and Me also, seated in the inner body—know these demoniacal in their resolves." (*Bhagavad-Gītā*, xvii. 5, 6.) And again, "The austerity done under a deluded understanding, with self-torture, . . . that is declared of darkness." (*Ibid*, xvii. 19.)

There appears to be a widely-spread delusion that to be really good one must always be uncomfortable—that discomfort as such is directly pleasing to the Logos. Nothing can be more grotesque than this idea, and in the above quoted texts from the *Bhagavad-Gītā* we have a hint that it is perhaps worse than grotesque, for it is there said that they who torment the body are tormenting the Logos enshrined in it.

With us in Europe this unfortunately common theory is one of the many horrible legacies left us by the ghastly blasphemy of Calvinism. I myself have actually heard a child say: "I feel so happy that I am sure I must be very wicked"—a truly awful result of criminally distorted teaching.

Our Masters, who are so far above us, are full of joy; full of sympathy, but not of sorrow. We also must feel sympathy with others, but not identify ourselves with their sorrow. A man in great trouble can judge nothing clearly. To his vision all the world seems dark, and it appears as if no one should be happy. When he is in great joy, all the world appears bright, and it seems as if no one ought to be unhappy. Yet nothing is changed, not even he himself, but only his astral body. All the world is going on just the same, whether you are happy or unhappy. Do not identify yourself with your astral body, but try to get out of this web of illusion, these personal moods.

No doubt this ludicrous theory of the merit of discomfort comes partly from the knowledge that in order to make progress man must control his passions, and from

the fact that such control is disagreeable to the unevolved person. But the discomfort is very far from being meritorious; on the contrary, it is a sign that the victory is not yet achieved. It arises from the fact that the lower nature is not yet dominated, and that a struggle is still taking place. When the control is perfect there will no longer be any desire for the lower, consequently no struggle and no discomfort. The man will live the right life and avoid the lower because it is perfectly natural for him to do so—no longer because he thinks he ought to make the effort, even though it may be difficult for him. So that the discomfort exists only at an intermediate stage, and not its absence, is the sign of success.

Another reason for the gospel of the uncomfortable is a confusion of cause and effect. It is observed that the really advanced person is simple in his habits, and often careless about a large number of minor luxuries that are considered important and really necessary by the ordinary man. But such carelessness about luxury is the effect, not the cause, of his advancement. He does not trouble himself about these little matters because he has largely outgrown them

and they no longer interest him—not in the least because he considers them as wrong; and one who, while still craving for them, imitates him in abstaining from them, does not thereby become advanced. At a certain stage a child plays with dolls and bricks: a few years later he has become a boy and his play is cricket and football; later again when he is a young man these in turn lose much of their interest, and he begins to play the game of love and life. But an infant who chooses to imitate his elders, who throws aside his dolls and bricks and attempts to play cricket, does not thereby transcend his infancy. As his natural growth takes place he puts away childish things; but he cannot force the growth merely by putting these away, and playing at being older.

There is no virtue whatever merely in being uncomfortable for discomfort's sake; but there are three cases in which voluntary discomfort may be a part of progress. The first is when it is undertaken for the sake of helping another, as when a man nurses a sick friend or labours hard to support his family. The second is when a man realises that some habit to which he

is addicted is a hindrance in his upward way—such a habit, say, as tobacco-smoking, alcohol-drinking, or corpse-eating. If he be in earnest he gives up the habit instantly, but because the body is accustomed to that particular form of pollution it misses it, cries out for it, and causes the man a great deal of trouble. If he holds firm to his resolution his body will presently adapt itself to the new conditions, and when it has done so there will be no further discomfort. But in the intermediate stage, while the battle for mastery between the man and his body is still being fought, there may be a good deal of suffering, and this must be taken as the karma of having adopted the vice which he is now forsaking. When the suffering passes the karma is paid, the victory is won, and a step in evolution is achieved.

I am aware that there are rare cases (when people are physically very weak) in which it might be dangerous to relinquish a bad habit instantaneously. The morphine habit is an instance in point; one who is a victim to its horrors usually finds it necessary gradually to decrease the dose, because the strain of abrupt cessation might well be greater

than the physical body could endure. It would seem that there are certain pitiable cases in which the same system of gradual decrease must be applied to the flesh-eating habit. Doctors tell us that while the digestion of flesh takes place chiefly in the stomach, that of most forms of vegetable food belongs rather to the work of the intestines; and therefore a person in very weak health sometimes finds it advisable to give to these various organs a certain amount of time to adjust themselves to the necessary change, and to practise, as it were, the functions which they are now required to fulfil. The steady pressure of the will, however, will soon bring the body into subjection and adapt it to the new order of things.

The third case in which discomfort may have its use is when a man deliberately forces his body to do something which it dislikes, in order to make sure that it will obey him when necessary. But it must be distinctly understood that even then the merit is in the ready obedience of the body, and not in its suffering. In this way a man may gradually learn indifference to many of the minor ills of life, and so save himself much worry and irritation.

In thus training himself in will, and his body in obedience, he must be careful to attempt only such things as are advantageous. The Hatha Yogī develops will-power, assuredly, when he holds his arm above his head until it withers; but while he gains enormously in will-power he also loses the use of his arm. The will-power can be developed just as well by some effort the result of which will be permanently useful instead of permanently hampering—by the conquest, for example, of irritability or pride, impatience or sensuality. It would be well if all who feel a yearning for asceticism would take to heart the words of wisdom in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*:

“Purity, straightforwardness, continence and harmlessness are called the austerity of the body. Speech causing no annoyance, truthful, pleasant and beneficial. . . is called the austerity of speech. Mental happiness, equilibrium, silence, self-control, purity of nature—this is called the austerity of the mind.” (xvii. 14, 15, 16.)

Note especially that in this last verse mental happiness is described as the first characteristic of the austerity of the mind—the first sign of the perfect self-control

necessary for one who wishes to make real progress. It is emphatically our duty to be happy; morbidity, gloom or depression mean always failure and weakness, because they mean selfishness. The man who allows himself to brood over his own sorrows or wrongs is forgetting his duty to his fellows. He permits himself to become a centre of infection, spreading gloom instead of joy among his brethren; what is this but the grossest selfishness? If there be any one who feels a yearning for asceticism, let him take up this mental austerity advised in the scripture, and resolve that whatever may be his private troubles or sufferings he will forget himself and them for the sake of others, so that he may ever be pouring forth upon his fellow-pilgrims the radiant happiness which comes from the fuller knowledge of the Theosophist, ever helping them towards the realisation that "Brahman is bliss."

SMALL WORRIES

Unnecessary worry appears to be the key-note of modern life. Not only those who are making special efforts to progress are making themselves unreasonably uncomfortable, but the same vice is quite common even in ordinary life. The astral body of the average man is a sad sight for a clairvoyant. The illustration in *Man Visible and Invisible* (p. 131) shows what an astral body ought to be—merely a reflection of the colours of the mental, indicating that the man allows himself to feel only what his reason dictates. But if that be too much to expect at this stage of evolution, the picture on p. 102 gives us an assortment of colours which represents an average astral body when comparatively at rest. In it there are many hues which show the presence of undesirable qualities—qualities which should be weeded out as soon as may be: but that side of the subject is treated in the book, and it is to another feature that I wish now to draw attention.

I have said that the illustration shows what an ordinary undeveloped astral body would look like if comparatively at rest;

but one of the evils of what we have agreed to call civilisation is that hardly any astral body ever is even comparatively at rest. Of course it is understood that the matter of an astral body must always be in perpetual vibration, and each of the colours that we see in the drawing marks a different rate of that vibration; but there should be a certain order in this, and a certain limit to it. The more developed man (on p. 131) has five rates of vibration, but the ordinary man shows at least nine rates, with a mixture of varying shades in addition. That is clearly not so good as the other, but the case of the majority of people in the West is really far worse than that. To have even nine rates of simultaneous vibration is already bad enough, but in the astral body of many a man and woman one might easily observe fifty rates or even a hundred. The body should be divided into a few fairly definite areas, each swinging steadily at its normal rate, but instead of that, its surface is usually broken up into a multiplicity of little whirlpools and cross-currents, all battling one against the other in the maddest confusion.

All these are the result of little unneces-

sary emotions and worries, and the ordinary person of the West is simply a mass of these. He is troubled about this thing, he is annoyed about that, he is in fear about a third, and so on; his whole life is filled with petty little emotions, and all his strength is frittered away on them. A really great emotion, be it good or bad, sweeps over the whole of a man's astral body and for the time brings it all to one rate of vibration; but these small worries make little vortices or centres of local disturbance, each of which persists for a considerable time.

The astral body which thus vibrates fifty ways at once is a blot upon the landscape and a nuisance to its neighbours. It is not only a very ugly object—it is also a serious annoyance. It may be compared to a physical body suffering from some unusually aggravated form of palsy, with all its muscles jerking simultaneously in different directions. But to make the illustration even partially adequate we should have to assume that this palsy was contagious, or that every one who saw its unfortunate results felt an irresistible tendency to reproduce them. For this horrible chaos of catastrophic con-

fusion produces an unpleasant and most disturbing effect upon all sensitive people who approach it; it infects their astral bodies and communicates to them a painful sensation of unrest and worry.

Only a few have yet unfolded the faculties which enable them to see this maleficent influence in action; a larger number are vaguely conscious of discomfort when they approach one of these fussy persons; but probably the majority feel nothing definite at the time of meeting, though later in the day they will probably wonder why they are so inexplicably fatigued. The effect is there and the harm is done, whether it be immediately perceptible or not.

A person who is so foolish as to allow himself to get into this condition does much harm to many, but most of all to himself. Frequently the perpetual astral disturbance reacts through the etheric upon the dense physical vehicle, and all sorts of nervous diseases are produced. Nearly all nerve-troubles are the direct result of unnecessary worry and emotion, and would soon disappear if the patient would but hold his vehicles still and possess his soul in peace.

But even in cases where a strong phys-

ical body is able successfully to resist this constant irritation from the astral, its effect upon its own plane is no less disastrous. These tiny centres of inflammation which thus cover the whole astral body are to it what boils are to the physical body—not only themselves causes of acute discomfort, sore spots the least touch upon which produces terrible pain, but also *weak* spots through which the life-blood of vitality drains away, and through which also blood-poisoning from without may take place. A person whose astral body is in this distracted condition can offer practically no resistance to any evil influence which he may encounter, while he is quite unable to profit by good influences. His strength flows out through these open sores, at the same time that all sorts of disease-germs find entrance by them. He is not using and controlling his astral body as a whole, but allowing it to break up into a number of separate centres and control *him*. His little worries and vexations establish themselves and confirm their empire over him until they become a legion of devils who possess him so that he cannot escape from them.

This is a painfully common condition ; how is a man to avoid falling into it, and if he is already in it, how is he to get out of it ? The answer is the same to both questions ; let him learn not to worry, not to fear, not to be annoyed. Let him reason with himself as to the utter unimportance of all these little personal matters which have loomed so large upon his horizon. Let him consider how they will appear when he looks back upon them from the next life, or even twenty years hence. Let him lay well to heart the words of wisdom, that of all the outward things that happen to a man "nothing matters much, and most things matter not at all." What he himself does or says or thinks *is* of importance to him, for that forms his future ; what other people do or say or think matters to him nothing whatever. Let him abstract himself from all these little pin-pricks of daily life, and simply decline to be worried by them.

It will need some resolution at first, for it requires effort to conquer a well-established bad habit. He will find his mind muttering to him over and over again : "Mrs. Jones spoke evil of me ; perhaps she is doing

it now ; perhaps other people may believe her ; perhaps it may do me harm," and so on *ad infinitum*. But he must reply ; " I don't care *what* Mrs. Jones has said, though I am sorry the poor woman should make such bad karma. I absolutely decline to think of it or of her. I have my work to do, and have no time to waste in thinking of foolish gossip."

Or it may be that forebodings of coming evil are constantly thrusting themselves into his brain : " Perhaps next year I may lose my position ; perhaps I shall be starving ; perhaps I shall be bankrupt ; perhaps I may lose the affection of some friend." This also should be met firmly : " Perhaps all these things may happen, but also perhaps they may not, and it is useless to try to cross a bridge before one comes to it. I shall take all reasonable precautions, and when that is done I decline to think further of the matter. Worrying cannot affect whatever may be coming, but it can and certainly will make me unfit to meet it. Therefore I refuse to worry ; I definitely turn my back on the whole subject."

Another common form of worry which

leads to the most serious results is the folly of taking offence at something which somebody else says or does. Ordinary common-sense would lead a man to avoid this mistake, and yet those who do avoid it are few. It needs only that we should think dispassionately about the matter, and we shall see that what the other man has said or done cannot make any difference to us. If he has said something which has hurt our feelings, we may be sure that in nine cases out of ten he has not meant it to be offensive; why then should we allow ourselves to be disturbed about the matter? Even in the rare cases when a remark is intentionally rude or spiteful, where a man has said something purposely to wound another, it is still exceedingly foolish of that other to allow himself to feel hurt. If the man had an evil intention in what he said, he is much to be pitied, for we know that under the law of divine justice he will certainly suffer for his foolishness. What he has said need in no way affect us; for, if we think of it, no effect whatever has really been produced.

The irritating word does not in any way

injure us, except in so far as we may choose to take it up and injure ourselves by brooding over it or allowing ourselves to be wounded in our feelings. What are the words of another, that we should let our serenity be disturbed by them? They are merely a vibration in the atmosphere; if it had not happened that we heard them, or heard of them, would they have affected us? If not, then it is obviously not the words that have injured us, but the fact that we heard them. So if we allow ourselves to care about what a man has said, it is *we* who are responsible for the disturbance created in our astral bodies, and not he.

The man has done and can do nothing that can harm us; if we feel hurt and injured and thereby make ourselves a great deal of trouble, we have only ourselves to thank for it. If a disturbance arises within our astral bodies in reference to what he has said, that is merely because we have not yet gained control over those bodies; we have not yet developed the calmness which enables us to look down *as souls* upon all this, and go on our way and attend to our own work without taking the

slightest notice of foolish or spiteful remarks made by other men. This is the merest common-sense, yet not one in a hundred will act upon it.

The fact is that any one who wishes to become a student of occultism must not have any personal feelings that can be offended under any circumstances whatever. A man who has them is still thinking of himself; whereas our duty is to forget ourselves in order to remember the good of others. Nothing can offend you if you have resolved not to be offended—if you are thinking only how to help the other man, and not at all of yourself.

Another variant of the disease is less personal and therefore is so far less blameworthy, but hardly less prejudicial to progress. It is the habit of fussing over trifles in business or in household affairs. This always involves a lack of discrimination and of the sense of perspective. It is quite true that a household or a business must be orderly, that things must be done punctually and exactly; but the way to achieve this is to set up a high ideal and press steadily towards it—not to irritate every one by ceaseless, useless worry. The person who

is so unfortunate as to be afflicted with a disposition of this kind should make a most determined fight against it, for until he conquers it he will be a force working always for friction and not for peace, and so will be of little real use in the world. His symptoms differ slightly from those of the more personal worrier; in his case there are fewer of the carbuncular vortices, but there is a perpetual tremor, an unrest of the whole astral body which is equally disquieting to others, equally subversive of happiness and advancement for the fusser himself.

The man *must* learn to be master of his mind and his feelings, and steadily reject every thought and emotion which his highest self does not approve. A chaos of petty emotions is unworthy of a rational being, and it is to the last degree undignified that man, who is a spark of the Divine, should allow himself to fall under the sway of his desire-elemental—a thing that is not even a mineral yet.

I have already said that this disastrous astral confusion is often prejudicial to physical health; but it is invariably worse than prejudicial to progress on the path—it is

absolutely fatal to it. One of the first great lessons to be learnt on that path is perfect self-control, and a long stage on the way to that is complete absence of worry. At first, from mere habit, the matter of the astral body will still be swept readily into unnecessary vortices, but every time that happens the man must firmly obliterate them, and restore the steady swing of the feelings which he, as an ego, really desires to have.

Let him fill himself so entirely with the divine love that it may be ever pouring from him in all directions in the shape of love for his fellow-men, and then there will be no room for unnecessary vibrations; he will have no time to worry over trifling personal matters if his whole life is spent in the service of the Logos, in trying to help forward the evolution of the world. To make any real progress or to do any real work a man must turn from the lower and reach towards the higher; he must come out of *our* world into *Theirs*—out of the restlessness into the peace which passeth understanding.

KILLING OUT DESIRE

We are often told that we must kill out desire; but it should be remembered that that is a gradual process. The lower and coarser desires which are meant by the Sanskrit word *kāma* must certainly be killed out entirely before any sort of advancement can be made, but in the English sense of the word we all of us still have certain desires, and are likely to have them for a very long time to come. We desire keenly for example to serve the Master; to become His pupils; to help humanity. These also are desires, but they should not be killed. What is necessary is to kill out the lower and reach up to the higher, that is to say, to purify our desires and to transmute them into aspirations.

Later on another transmutation will take place. For example, now we desire to make progress; but a time will come when we shall be so sure of it that we shall cease to desire, because we know that all the time it is going on as rapidly as is possible for us, and because we mean that it shall so go on. Desire is then

transmuted into resolution. At this point there can be no more regret for anything; you do your best and you know that in response to that the best must come. Some people desire earnestly to gain this quality or that; do not waste your power in desiring and wishing, but *will* instead.

In the same way it is said that we should slay the lunar form, that is to say the astral body. But that does not mean that the astral body must be destroyed or that we must be without feelings and emotions. If that could be so we should have no sympathy and no understanding of others. What is intended is that we should keep it completely under control, that we should have the faculty to slay the lunar form *at will*. Purity is necessary, but it means not only the abstinence from specified faults, but absolute selflessness. Ambition, for example, is a very common form of desire, but in it there is always a thought of self. The adept cannot be ambitious. His will is one with the will of the Logos, and He wills evolution. We are all parts of the Logos, and our wills are part of His. It is only when we do not realise this that we set up desires on our own separate

lines: The regulations for our lives were very well summed up by the Lord BUDDHA in one little verse of four short lines:

Sabbapāpassa akaranam
Kusalassa upasampada
Sāchitta pariyo dapanam
Etam Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.

Cease from all evil;
Learn to do well;
Cleanse your own heart;
This is the religion of the BUDDHAS.

THE CENTRE OF MY CIRCLE

Of all the many obstacles that stand in the way of the aspirant who wishes to enter upon the Path, the most serious, because the most far-reaching and fundamental, is self-centredness. Note that by this I do not mean the crude and ugly selfishness, which definitely seeks everything for itself even at the cost of others. I am of course supposing that that at least has been left behind long ago. But in those who have left it behind, there still

lingers this other evil—so subtle and so deeply-rooted that they do not recognise it as an evil at all—indeed they are not even aware of its existence. But let a man examine himself honestly and impartially, and he will find that all his thought is self-centred; he thinks often of other people and of other things, but always in their relation to himself; he weaves many imaginary dramas, but he himself occupies always a prominent rôle in them. He must always be in the centre of his little stage, with the limelight playing upon him; if he is not in that position he at once feels hurt, annoyed, angry, and jealous of any other person who happens for the moment to be attracting the attention of those who ought to be worshipping at *his* shrine. To change so fundamental a quality is to change for him the root of all things, to make himself into an altogether different man. Most people cannot for a moment face the possibility of such a radical change because they do not even know that the condition exists.

Now this attitude is absolutely fatal to any kind of progress. It must be utterly changed, and yet so few are making any

attempt to change it. There is one way out of this vicious circle, and only one; and that is the way of love. That is the only thing in the life of the ordinary man which ever changes this condition for him, which seizes upon him with a strong hand and for the time being alters his whole attitude. For a time at least, when he falls in love, as it is called, some other person occupies the centre of his circle, and he thinks of everything in all the world in its relation to her, and not in its relation to himself. The divinity at whose shrine he offers this worship may in truth seem to the rest of the world to be but a very ordinary person, but for him she is temporarily the incarnation of grace and beauty; he sees in her the divinity which is in truth hers, because it lies latent in all of us, though normally we do not see it. It is true that in many cases after a time his enthusiasm fades and he transfers it to another object; but nevertheless for the time he has ceased to be self-centred, for the time he has had a wider outlook.

Now this, which the ordinary man thus does unconsciously, the student of occultism must do consciously. He must deliberately

dethrone himself from the centre of the circle of his life, and he must enthrone the Master there instead. He has been in the habit of thinking instinctively how everything will affect him, or what he can make of it, how he can turn it to his profit and pleasure. Instead of that he must now learn to think of *everything* as it affects the Master, and since the Master lives only to help the evolution of humanity, that means that he must regard everything from the standpoint of its helpfulness or hindrance to the cause of evolution. And though at first he will have to do this consciously and with a certain effort, he must persevere until he does it just as unconsciously, just as instinctively as heretofore he centred everything around himself. To use the words of a Master, he must forget himself utterly only to remember the good of others.

But even when he has dethroned himself and enthroned the work which he has to do, he must be exceedingly careful that he does not delude himself, that he does not return to the old self-centredness in a subtler form. Many a good and earnest Theosophical worker have I known who com-

mitted this very mistake, who identified Theosophical work with himself, and felt that anyone who did not exactly agree with his ideas and his methods was an enemy of Theosophy. So often the worker thinks that his way is the only way, and that to differ from him in opinion is to be a traitor to the cause. But this means only that the self has crept skilfully back into its old place in the centre of the circle, and that the work of dislodging it must be begun all over again. The only power which the disciple should desire is that which makes him seem as nothing in the eyes of men. When he is the centre of his circle he may do good work, but it is always with the feeling that *he* is doing it, even largely with the object that it may be *he* that does it; but when the Master is the centre of his circle he will do the work simply in order that it may be done. The work is done for the sake of the work and not for the sake of the doer. And he must learn to look upon his own work precisely as though it were that of some one else, and upon the work of some one else precisely as though it were his own. The one thing that is important is

that the work should be done. It matters little who does it. Therefore he ought neither to be prejudiced in favour of his own work and unduly critical of that of another, nor be hypocritically depreciatory of his own work in order that others may praise it. To quote the words of Ruskin with regard to art, he ought to be able to say serenely: "Be it mine or yours, or whose else it may, this also is well."

Another danger there is too, which is special to the Theosophical worker—the danger of congratulating himself too soon that he differs from the rest of the world. Theosophical teaching puts a new complexion upon everything, so naturally we feel that our attitude is quite different from that of most other people. There is no harm in thinking this obvious truth, but I have found that some of our members are apt to pride themselves upon the fact that they are able to recognise these things. It does not in the least follow that we, who find ourselves able to recognise them, are therefore better than others. Other men have developed themselves along other lines, and along those lines they may be very far in advance of

us, though along our own line they lack something which we already have. Remember, the adept is the perfect man who is fully developed along all possible lines, and so while we have something to teach these others we also have much to learn from them, and it would be the height of folly to despise a man because he has not yet acquired Theosophical knowledge, nor even perhaps the qualities which enable him to appreciate it. Therefore in this sense also we must take care not to be the centre of our own circle.

A good plan that you may adopt in order to keep yourself from slipping back into the centre may be to remember, as a symbol of what ought to be your attitude, what I have before explained to you with regard to the occult view of the course and influence of the planets. You remember how I explained to you that each planet is a minor focus in an ellipse, the major focus of which is within the body of the sun. You are like that minor focus; you are going upon your own course and doing the work appointed to you, and yet all the time you are but a reflection of the major focus, and your consciousness is centred within the sun, for the Master of whom

you are a part is a member of the Great Hierarchy which is ever doing the work of the Logos.

While a man is the centre of his own circle he is perpetually making the mistake of thinking that he is the centre of everybody else's. He constantly supposes that in everything which other people say or do they are somehow thinking of him, or aiming their remarks at him, and with many this becomes a kind of obsession, and they seem totally unable to realise that each of their neighbours is as a rule also entirely wrapped up in himself and not thinking of them at all. So the man makes for himself a great deal of totally unnecessary trouble and worry, all of which might be avoided if he would but see things in a sane and rational perspective. Again, it is because he is the centre of his own circle that he is liable to depression, for that comes only to one who is thinking of himself. If the Master be the centre of his circle, and all his energies are centred upon serving Him, he has no time for depression, nor has he the slightest inclination towards it. He is far too eagerly wishing for work that he can

do. His attitude should be that indicated by our President in her *Autobiography*—that when a man sees a piece of work waiting to be done he should say, not as the ordinary man usually does: “Yes, it would be a good thing, and somebody ought to do it. But why should I?”—but rather he should say: “Somebody ought to do this. Why should it not be I?”

As he evolves his circle will widen, and in the end there will come a time when his circle will be infinite in extent, and then in a sense he himself will again be its centre, because he has identified himself with the Logos, who is the centre of all possible circles, since every point is equally the centre of a circle whose radius is infinite.

OUR DUTY TO ANIMALS

While you are trying to do your best for all those around you, do not forget that you also have a duty towards forms of life lower than the human. In order that you

may be able to do that, try to understand your lower brothers, try to understand the animals, just as you try to understand on a higher level the children with whom you have to deal. Just as you learn, if you want to help a child, to look at things from the child's point of view, so, if you want to help the animal evolution, try to see what is the animal's point of view. In all cases and with all forms of life our business is to love and to help, and to try to bring nearer the golden age when all shall understand one another and all shall co-operate in the glorious work that is to come.

There is no reason why our domestic animals should not be trained to help man, and to work in his service, so long as the work is not painful or excessive. But all the creatures around us should be trained in the way best for themselves; that is to say, we should always remember that their evolution is the object of the divine will. So that while we should surely teach our animals all that we can, because that develops their intelligence, we must take care that we instil into them good qualities and not evil. We have

various creatures brought among us. We have the dog, the cat, the horse and other originally wild animals given into our care—brought to us for affection and help. Why? That we may train them out of their ferocity, and into a higher and more intelligent state of life—that we may evoke in them devotion, affection and intellect.

But we must take good care that we help, not hinder; we must see that we do not increase in our animal the ferocious qualities which it is the business of his evolution to get rid of. For example, a man who trains a dog to hunt and kill is intensifying within him the very instincts which must be eliminated if the animal is to evolve, and in this way he is degrading a creature given into his charge instead of helping him on his way, even though at the same time he may be developing the animal's intelligence; and thus though he may do a little good, he is at the same time doing a great deal of harm which far more than counterbalances it. The same thing is true of a man who trains his dog to be ferocious in order that he may be an efficient protector of his property.

A man who treats an animal harshly or

cruelly may possibly be evolving his intellect, since the animal may learn to think more keenly in order to see how to avoid the cruelty. But along with whatever evolution may be gained in this way, there is also the development of the exceedingly undesirable qualities of fear and hatred. Thus when, later on, that animal wave of life goes up into humanity, we shall have a humanity starting terribly handicapped—starting with these awful qualities of fear and hatred ingrained in it, instead of a humanity all aspiring, devotional, loving and gentle, such as we might have had if the men to whom the animal part of that evolution was committed had done their duty.

We have also our duty towards other and even lower forms of life than that. There is the elemental essence, which is surrounding us everywhere; that elemental essence progresses by means of our thought, and of the action which we produce upon it by our thoughts, passions, emotions and feelings. We need not trouble ourselves especially about that, because if we carry out our higher ideals, if we try to see to it that all our thought and all our emotion shall be of the highest possible type, then

that also will, at the same time and without further difficulty, be the discharging of our duty towards the elemental essences which are influenced by our thought; they will be raised and not depressed; the higher qualities which we alone can reach will be set in motion, vivified and helped at their respective levels.

All through evolution the assistance of the higher is expected in the development of the lower, and it is not only by individualising them that man has helped the members of the animal kingdom. In Atlantean days the very formation of their species was largely given over into his hands, and it is because he failed to do his duty properly that many things turned out rather differently from what was originally intended. His mistakes are largely responsible for the existence of carnivorous creatures which live only to destroy one another. Not that he was responsible for *all* carnivorous creatures; there were such among the gigantic reptiles of the Lemurian period, and man was not in any way directly engaged in their evolution; but it was in part his work to assist in the development from those reptile forms of

the mammalia which play so prominent a part in the world now. Here was his opportunity to improve the breeds and to curb the undesirable qualities of the creatures that came under his hands; and it is because he failed to do all that he might have done in this direction that he is to some extent responsible for much that has since gone wrong in the world. If he had done all his duty it is quite conceivable that we might have had no carnivorous mammals.

Mankind has for so long treated animals cruelly that the whole animal world has a general feeling of fear and enmity towards men. Men have generated in this way an awful karma, which comes back upon them in terrible suffering, in various forms of disease and of insanity. Yet even after all this bad behaviour on the part of man, few animals will harm him if left alone. A serpent, for example, will not usually do any injury to a human being, unless he is first hurt or frightened; and the same thing is true of nearly all wild animals, except the very few who may regard man as food, and even they usually will not touch man if they can get anything else. Except when it is absolutely

necessary in self-defence or in defence of another the destruction of any form of life ought always to be avoided, as it tends to retard nature's work. That is one of the reasons why all consistent Theosophists refuse to share the sin of slaughter by eating meat or fish, or by wearing such things as are obtained only by the slaughter of animals, like sealskin or the feathers of birds. Silk used to be obtained by the wholesale slaughter of silkworms, but I hear that there is now a new way of obtaining it without destroying the worm.

SYMPATHY

Never set yourself against the law of nature. Lately, man has gone astray from nature very much, and materialism has become widely spread. Many scientific men who know a great deal more about nature are very much less in sympathy with her than were their less instructed forefathers. In the useful, and indeed necessary, study of the exterior many have forgotten the interior; but men will pass through this

intermediate stage of misunderstanding and come back into sympathy. The older people, who had a closer kinship with nature, carried on little of detailed examination, which would have seemed irreverent to them. Because we have become irreverent, have lost the living feeling, we pry remorselessly. We must take care not to lose the precision that we have gained by this intermediate stage, but must recover the sympathy. By sympathy one may find out a great deal which science alone can never discover. In the teaching of children, we need to make them feel that we understand them, even though in doing so we may sacrifice some scholastic advantages. The average child regards grown-up people as foreign entities, strange arbitrary beings.

All this is true also in connection with our studies of nature. The nature-spirits are afraid of us, if we study them too scientifically; we must go with them into their life, and then they will be interested in the life of humanity also. In their blind way, flowers and other things feel joy and friendliness. Emerson said that it appeared to him that when he returned home, the trees in his garden felt glad to

see or feel him again, and no doubt it was quite true. The trees and animals do know the people who love them. In India people speak of the "lucky hand" in planting, meaning that things will grow for some people, but not for others. One must be in sympathy with the purpose of the LOGOS. If we are actively helping in the progress of all, we are living in His will, which penetrates nature, and this is felt by nature at once; but if we put ourselves in opposition to evolution, nature shrinks back from us like a sensitive child.

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS CHILDREN

What is your attitude towards your children? Remember that these are egos, sparks of the divine life. They have been entrusted to you, not that you may domineer over them and brutally ill-treat them, and use them for your own profit and advantage, but that you may love them and help them in order that they may be expressions of that divine life. What an outpouring of love then you ought to feel!

How beyond all words your patience and compassion should be ! How deeply you should feel the honour of being trusted to serve them in this way ! Remember always that you are not the older and they the younger, but that as souls you are all of about the same age, and therefore your attitude must not be that of a selfish and cruel dictator, but of a helpful friend. You do not regard your friend differently when he puts on a new coat ; remember therefore that when you meet a child you are meeting a soul wearing a new coat, and you should try by perfect kindness and love to draw out the best that is in it, and to help it to fit on its new coat. Remember always that true good means good for all, and that good is *never* gained at the cost of suffering to others. That which is so gained is not really good at all.

THE FEAR OF DEATH

The fear of death is a stern reality in the minds of many people. A far larger

number suffer from it than one would suppose, and still more from the fear of what may happen to us after death. Naturally this is especially to be found among people who have ideas of hell, and of probable punishment if they do not believe this or that. It is a gross and degraded form of superstition, but still the suffering is real, and what is even worse is the fear as to the fate of *others* after death. Many a mother's whole life is embittered by doubts and fears as to what may happen to her son. He goes far away from her, perhaps; he falls into the ordinary habits of men of the world, and does many things contrary to the narrow religious teaching in which she has been brought up, and so she thinks that he must suffer eternal torture. While it is true that there is no eternal hell for him, there is certainly much real earthly suffering for her.

But we know the law of karma, and realise that the states after death are simply a continuation of the life which we are now living, although on a higher plane and without a physical body; and when in addition we learn that what we commonly call life is only one day in the real and

greater life, then all these things assume quite a different perspective. We know then that progress is absolutely certain. A man may stumble, he may set himself against the forces of progress, but he will be carried on by them in spite of himself, though when he resists there will be much of bruising and trouble for him. We see at once that this knowledge eliminates fear.

The so-called loss of a loved one by death is really only a temporary absence, and not even that as soon as a man develops the power to see on the higher planes. Those whom we think we have lost are with us still, even though with our physical eyes we cannot see them; and we should never forget that, although we may sometimes be under the delusion that we have lost them, they are not in the least under the delusion that they have lost *us*, because they can still see our astral bodies, and as soon as we leave the physical vehicle in sleep we are with them and can communicate with them exactly as when they were on the physical plane.

We need not worry ourselves about saving our souls; rather on the other hand, as a Theosophical writer once said, we may not

be entirely beyond the hope that some day our souls may save us. There is no soul to be saved in the ordinary sense in which the words are used, because we ourselves are the souls; and furthermore there is nothing to be saved from except our own error and ignorance. The body is nothing but a vestment, and when it is worn out we cast it aside.

CO-OPERATION

It is part of the scheme of the LOGOS that at a certain stage in its evolution humanity must begin to guide itself. Therefore all the future BUDDHAS, Manus and Adepts will be members of our own humanity, the Lords from Venus having gone on to other worlds. Therefore also the LOGOS actually counts upon us all, upon you and upon me. We may have ninety-nine faults and only one virtue, but if that one virtue is needed in the Theosophical work (and what virtue is not needed?) we shall surely have the opportunity to use it.

We should then value our co-workers for what they can do, and not be constantly blaming them for what they cannot do. Many people have earned the right to do some particular kind of work, notwithstanding that their defects may be greater than their virtues. People often make a sad mistake in comparing their work with that of others, and wishing that they had the same opportunities. The truth is that each one has his own gifts and his own powers, and it is not expected of any man that he should do as much as some other man, but only that he should do his best—just his own best.

The Master once said that in reality there are only two classes of men—those who know and those who do not know. Those who know are they who have seen the light and have turned towards it, through whatever religion they have come, at however great a distance from the light they may as yet find themselves. Many of them may be suffering much in their struggle towards that light, but at least they have hope before them, and while we sympathise deeply with them and strive to help them we yet realise that they are by

no means in the worst case. The people really to be pitied are those who are quite indifferent to all higher thought—those who do not struggle because they do not care, or think, or know that there is anything for which to strive. These are they in truth who constitute “the great orphan, humanity.”

A DAY OF LIFE

It is not wise to specialise beyond a certain point, because one can never really get to the end of any subject, and it tends more and more to narrow the mind and the outlook, to produce a one-sided and distorted development, and to cause one to view everything out of its due proportion. We are in the habit of thinking of a life-time as a long period, but really it is only a day in the greater life. You cannot finish a really great piece of work in one day; it may need many days, and the work of one particular day may at the time show no appreciable result; but nevertheless every day's

work is necessary to the completion of the great task, and if a man should idle day after day because the completion of the work seems so far off he would certainly not succeed in getting it done.

There are many to whom Theosophy comes late in life, who feel themselves somewhat discouraged by the outlook, thinking they are too old now to take themselves in hand seriously or to do any valuable work, that the best that they can do now is to go quietly on to the end of this incarnation in the hope that they may have a better opportunity in the next.

This is a sad mistake, and that for various reasons. You do not know what kind of incarnation karma is preparing for you next time you return to earth. You do not know whether by any previous action you have deserved the opportunity of being born into Theosophical surroundings. In any case the most likely way to secure such a birth is to make use of the opportunity which has come to you now, for, of all that we have learned about the working of this great law of cause and effect, this one fact stands out most clearly—that the result of taking an opportunity is invariably that

another and wider opportunity is given. If therefore you neglect the opportunity put before you by your encounter with Theosophy now, it is possible that in the next incarnation the chance may not come to you again.

If a man sets to work earnestly and permeates his spirit as thoroughly as possible with Theosophical ideas, that will build them well into the ego, and will give him so great an attraction towards them that he is certain, even though he may not remember them in detail, to seek for them instinctively, and to recognise them, in his next birth. Every man therefore should begin Theosophical work just as soon as he hears of it, because whatever of it he contrives to achieve, however little it may be, will be just so much to the good, and he will begin to-morrow where he has left off this time. Also by trying to do what he can with such vehicles as he has, obstinate and unresponsive though they may prove through lack of pliability, he will assuredly do much to earn for himself more pliable vehicles for next time. So no effort is lost, and it is never too late in any given life to enter upon the long,

long upward path, and to make a commencement in the glorious work of helping others.

With an eternal life before us it would be a mistake to worry because the present day is drawing near its evening, or in despair to neglect the preparations for the coming day. *Light on the Path* says: "Kill out desire of life." This is often misunderstood, but its meaning should be plain. You cannot lose your life; why then should you desire it? It cannot possibly be taken from you. At the same time the quotation means that you should kill out desire for particular bodily conditions.

MEDITATION

I think that our members sometimes mistake with regard to meditation, because they have not thoroughly understood the exact way in which it works. They sometimes think that because they do not feel happy and uplifted after a meditation it is therefore a failure and entirely useless, or they find themselves dull and heavy and incapa-

ble of meditation. There seems no reality in anything for them, no certainty about anything, and they feel that they are making no progress. They suppose that this must be somehow their own fault and they reproach themselves for it; but they often ask what they can do to improve matters and to restore the joy they used to feel.

Now the fact is that that experience in regard to meditation is that of all seekers after the spiritual life; you will find that the Christian saints constantly speak of their sufferings at periods of what they call "spiritual dryness," when nothing seems any use and they feel as though they had lost sight of God altogether. Imagine that I am sitting looking through a wide-open window upon a beautiful hill-side, but the sky is dull grey, heavy with a vast pall of cloud probably miles in thickness. I have not seen the sun for three days. I cannot feel his rays, but I know he is there, and I know that some day these clouds will roll away as others have done, and I shall see him again. What is necessary for the life of the world is that he should be *there*, not that I should see him; it is far pleasanter to see him and to feel the warmth of his rays,

but it is not a necessity of life. I know just exactly how these people feel, and it is cold comfort to be told that our feelings do not matter, even though there is a very real sense in which it is true.

I think it is helpful to remember that our meditation has several objects—for example:

1. To ensure that, however deeply we may be immersed in the affairs of the world, we shall devote at least some time each day to the thought of a high ideal.

2. To draw us nearer to the Master and to the Logos, so that from Them strength may be poured upon us and through us to benefit the world.

3. To train our higher bodies, so that they may have constant practice in responding to the highest vibrations—to do the same thing for them that a carefully arranged system of gymnastics or regular exercise does for the physical body.

Now you will observe that all these objects are attained just the same whether we feel happy or not. A mistake that many people make is to suppose that a meditation which is unsatisfactory *to them* is therefore ineffectual. It is just like a little child per-

forming daily her hour of practice upon the piano. Sometimes perhaps she partially enjoys it, but very often it is a mere weariness to her, and her only thought is to finish it as quickly as possible. She does not know, but we do, that every such hour is accustoming her fingers to the instrument, and is bringing nearer and nearer the time when she will derive from her music an enjoyment of which now she does not even dream. You will observe that this object is being attained just as much by the unpleasant and unsatisfactory hour of practice as by that which she enjoys. So in the work of our meditation sometimes we feel happy and uplifted, and sometimes not; but in both cases alike it has been acting for our higher bodies as do the exercises of physical culture or training for our physical body. It is pleasanter when you have what you call a 'good' meditation; but the only difference between what seems a good one and a bad one lies in its effect upon the feelings, and not in the real work which it does towards our evolution.

The reason of the temporary dullness is not always in ourselves—or rather, it is not

always attributable to anything that can reasonably be called our fault. Often it is purely physical, resulting from over-fatigue or a nervous strain; often it is due to surrounding astral or mental influences. Of course it is our karma to be subjected to these, and so in that more remote way we are responsible; but we must just do the best we can with them, and there is no need for us to be despondent, or to waste our time reproaching ourselves.

Another reason also may be that at certain times the planetary influences are more favourable for meditation than at others. I know nothing of this myself, for I have never considered the planetary influences in these matters, but have always forced my way to what I desired; but I have heard a friend say that an astrologer told him that on certain occasions when Jupiter had certain relations with the moon this had the effect of expanding the etheric atmosphere and making meditation easier, or at least making it appear more successful. The astrologer gave him a list, which he consulted after taking notes of the conditions of his meditations daily for three or four weeks, when he found that the results

exactly agreed with the influences which were said to be acting. Certain aspects with Saturn, on the other hand, were said to congest the etheric atmosphere, making the work of meditation difficult, and this also was verified in the same way.

The highest thought that we can have is that of the supreme Lord of all, but of course we must not suppose that our thought changes in the least the attitude of the Supreme towards us. We who are students ought to be far beyond the stage at which a man thinks that he can produce change in the Supreme—a thought which belongs only to the ignorant and unphilosophical among the Christians. We ourselves however are certainly affected by opening ourselves to Him. If you open the window of your room to the sun, the condition of your room is much changed by the power of the sun, but the sun is in no way changed by your opening the window. Open the windows of your soul to God.

During meditation one may try to think of the Supreme Self in everything and everything in it. Try to understand how the Self is endeavouring to express itself through the form. One method of practice

for this is to try to identify your consciousness with that of various creatures, such as a fly, an ant, or a tree. Try to see and feel things as they see and feel them, until as you pass inwards all consciousness of the tree or the insect falls away, and the life of the Logos appears. We are very much more than the tree or the ant; therefore there is no danger of our being unable to withdraw our consciousness when the experiment is finished. We do not after all imprison it in the form of the tree or the ant; we expand it to take in the life in every form. The man who does this for the first time is usually surprised when he realises the limitations under which animals act. He had thought an animal acted in a certain way for what seemed quite obvious reasons, but when he really enters into the animal he finds that its motives and intentions are wholly different. The disciple has to go through this process also with lower classes of human beings, because without it he could not perfectly help them.

This enables us to get down to the bed-rock of the Self, and clears away the darkness and loneliness which often come over us

at one stage in our progress. When we know quite certainly that we are part of a whole we do not so much mind where this particular fragment of it may be, or through what experiences it may be passing. Whatever loneliness we may have, we feel, we know, that we are never alone; the Master is always there waiting to help where help is possible. We must give up the clinging to particular forms, and have no motive but to do the will of the Logos. We must never allow the feeling of loneliness to make us forget the Master or lose faith in Him, for no progress is possible unless we have the fullest confidence in the Master whom we choose to serve. If we have only a half-hearted questioning faith in Him we cannot progress. We need not make the choice of a Master unless we will; but having made it we *must* have faith in the Teacher and His message.

In controlling the mind one must first turn away the senses from outward sounds and sights, and become insensitive to the waves of thought and emotion from others. That is comparatively easy, but the next stage is very difficult, for when this is done there come up from within disturbances which

spring from the uncontrolled activity of the mind. The meditation of many of our beginners consists mostly of a continuous struggle to come back to the point. Here comes in the advice given in *The Voice of the Silence*. "The mind is the slayer of the real; let the disciple slay the slayer." You must not of course destroy your mind, for you cannot get along without it, but you must dominate it; it is *yours*, not *you*. The best way to overcome its wandering is to use the will. It is often suggested that the pupil should help himself by making a shell round him; but after all shells are but crutches. Develop will, and you will be able to dispense with them. The astral body tries to impose itself upon you in the same way, and to make you believe that its desires are yours; but with that also we must deal in a precisely similar manner.

There is no limit to the degree to which will may be developed. There are decided limitations to the extent to which the strength of the physical body can be increased, but there seem to be no limitations in the case of the will. Fortunately we can train it in the ordinary small things of daily life every day and all day long, and

we can have no better practice than this. It is much easier for a man to screw up his courage to face a dramatic martyrdom before a crowd of people than to go on doing the tiresome daily duty with tiresome people day after day and year after year. This latter needs much more will-power than the former. Be careful however that you do not make others suffer in your efforts to develop your own will. Sometimes people have shown will-power by leaving home and friends and going out to face all kinds of difficulties and privations in order to do Theosophical work. That is quite right if a man is absolutely free to do it; but a man who left his wife and family for that purpose, or an only son who left parents that were dependent upon him, would evidently be neglecting his duty in a way which no one has a right to do, even for the sake of the noblest motives.

As a result of determined meditation we begin to build into our bodies the higher kinds of matter. At this stage we often feel grand emotions, coming from the buddhic level and reflected in the astral body, and under their influence we may do fine work and show great self-sacrifice. But

then is needed the development of the mental and causal bodies in order to steady and balance us; otherwise the grand emotions that have swayed us in the right direction may very readily become a little twisted and sway us along some other and less desirable lines. With feeling alone we never obtain perfect balance or steadiness. It is well that the high feelings should come, and the more powerfully they come the better, but that is not enough; wisdom and steadiness must also be acquired, because we need directing power as well as motive force. The very meaning of buddhi is wisdom, and when that comes it swallows up all else.

Illumination may mean three quite different things. First, a man, by setting himself to think intensely and very carefully over a subject may arrive at some conclusion with respect to it. Secondly, he may hope to obtain some illumination from his higher self—to discover what the ego really thinks on its own plane about the matter in question. Thirdly, a highly developed man may come into touch with Masters or devas. It is only in the first case that his conclusions would be likely to

be vitiated by his own thought-forms. The higher self would be able to transcend these, and so would a Master or a deva.

All these would have no difficulty in presenting things as they really are; but we must remember that we have not only to absorb the information, but also to bring it down into the physical brain, and as soon as it reaches that brain it will begin to be coloured by prejudices. What we can do in meditation depends upon what we are doing all day long. If we have built up prejudices in ordinary life we cannot escape from them during the time of meditation; but if we patiently endeavour to root out our prejudices and to learn that the ways of others are just as good as our own, we are at least on our way towards establishing a gentle and tolerant attitude which will assuredly extend itself to the special time of our meditation. It is easy for us to see the disadvantages of any new ideas or suggestions; these leap to the eyes. But look for the good also, which does not always so readily emerge.

During meditation the ego regards the personality much as at any other time—he

is slightly contemptuous usually. Remember your physical meditation is not for the ego, but for the training of the various vehicles to be a channel for the ego. If the ego is at all developed he will meditate also upon his own level; but it does not follow that his meditation will synchronise with that of the personality. The force coming down is always that of the ego, but only a small part, giving a one-sided conception of things. The yoga of a fairly well-developed ego is to try to raise his consciousness first into the buddhic plane and then through its various stages. He does this without reference to what the personality happens to be doing at the time. Such an ego would probably also send down a little of himself at the personal meditation, though his own meditations are very different.

For the development of the powers of the soul, thought-control is an essential prerequisite. When the thought is controlled and the will is strong a good deal may be achieved in various directions. Much help may be given both to the living and to the dead, and those who are sick or sorrowful may be greatly helped and strengthened.

It is well for each member to make it a daily practice to devote a certain time to the sending out of such thoughts to people who are personally known to him—in addition, I mean, to the ordinary meditation which he undertakes for the sake of his own development. The same thing can be done to some extent in group meditation; the thoughts of all may be concentrated for a few minutes upon some one who is known to be in trouble or suffering, and a determined effort made to send strength and consolation. The same power used in a different way will often cure physical diseases.

As to the development of astral sight and hearing, one hardly regards that as an end in itself, but rather as a means to an end. It seems best to utilise to the utmost all the powers that we already possess, and wait for these others to unfold themselves as the result of study and unselfish work. Such powers are undoubtedly a help, though they may be a danger if they come before the character is fully developed. For any one who wishes to hasten their unfoldment I should recommend the process which I describe in the last chapter of *The Other Side of Death*.

Where a house is large enough to permit it, it is a good idea to set apart a room especially for meditation. I see no harm in holding group-meetings in such a room if the group be earnest and harmonious, but *not* if there is to be anything of the nature of discussion or wrangling. If you are trying experiments with mediums of any sort I should advise the use of some other room. You ask whether you should enter such a room when you feel worried; don't be worried, don't even admit the possibility of being worried. I advise you not to make a thought-form, "I am worried, therefore I must not enter," but rather to take exactly the opposite line, "I am about to enter, therefore I am no longer worried." You will find that much more effective.

Fourth Section

The Higher Planes

FOURTH SECTION

• NIRVANA

It has often been said that in the final consummation all individual souls merge into the Great Soul, and our students sometimes find it difficult to reconcile this with other statements which seem to imply that the individuality is maintained, in some form or other, even up to the very greatest heights. The fact is that no experience which we can have, and no ideas which we can formulate down here in our physical brain, will at all express the glorious realities of nirvāna and the planes beyond it. We know so little of that transcendent glory, and what little we do know can never be put into adequate words. Perhaps, however, it is in a certain sense somewhat misleading to speak of individual souls as merging into the Great Soul. Every monad

is fundamentally a spark of the divine triad; he cannot merge into that of which he is already a part. Surely a better explanation of what happens would be to say that as he evolves the spark develops into flame; he becomes more and more conscious of his unity with the divine, and so the Logos is able more and more to manifest Himself through him.

This much at least I can say, that up to the highest level of consciousness which any of our students have yet attained—up even to what is commonly called nirvāna itself, there is no loss of individuality, of the power to think, to plan and to act. Long before that there is an entire loss of the sense of *separateness*, but that is a very different thing. Sir Edwin Arnold wrote of that beatific condition that “the dewdrop slips into the shining sea.” Those who have passed through that most marvellous of experiences know that, paradoxical as it may seem, the sensation is exactly the reverse, and that a far closer description would be that the ocean had somehow been poured into the drop!

That consciousness, wide as the sea, with “its centre everywhere and its cir-

cumference nowhere" is a great and glorious *fact*; but when a man attains it, it seems to him that his consciousness has widened to take in all that, not that he is merged into something else. And he is right, for that which he had ignorantly supposed to be *his* consciousness was never his at all, but only the shining of the divine power and wisdom and love through him, and he is now at last beginning to realise that stupendous fact. The truth is that what is commonly understood by individuality is a delusion and has never existed, but all that is best and noblest in that conception is maintained up to adeptship and far beyond, even into the realm of the great Planetary Spirits, for They are assuredly individuals, though mighty beyond our feeble powers of conception.

Even though the attempt be foredoomed to failure, let me endeavour to give some slight idea of an experience which some of us once had in connection with this lofty plane. Before we ourselves by our own efforts were able to touch it, a Master, for certain purposes of His own, enfolded us in His higher aura, and enabled us through Him to know something of the glories of nirvāna.

Try to imagine the whole universe filled with and consisting of an immense torrent of living light, and in it a vividness of life and an intensity of bliss altogether beyond all description, a hundred thousand times beyond the greatest bliss of heaven. At first we feel nothing but the bliss; we see nothing but the intensity of the light; but gradually we begin to realise that even in this dazzling brightness there are brighter spots—nuclei, as it were—which are built of the light because there is nothing but the light, and yet through them somehow the light gleams out more brightly, and obtains a new quality which enables it to be perceptible upon other and lower planes, which without this would be altogether beneath the possibility of sensing its effulgence. And by degrees we begin to realise that these subsidiary suns are the Great Ones, that these are Planetary Spirits, Great Angels, Kārmic Deities, Buddhas, Christs and Masters, and that through Them the light and the life are flowing down to the lower planes. Gradually, little by little, as we become more accustomed to the stupendous reality, we begin to see that, in a far lower sense, even we

ourselves are a focus in that cosmic scheme, and that through us also, at our much lower level, the light and the life are flowing to those who are still further away—not from it, for we are all part of it and there is nothing else anywhere—but further from the realisation of it, the comprehension of it, the experience of it.

If we can see and grasp even a little of the glory, we can to some extent reflect it to others who are less fortunate. That light shines for every one, and it is the only reality ; yet men by their ignorance and by their foolish actions may so shut themselves away that they cannot see it, just as the sun floods the whole world with light and life, and yet men may hide themselves in caves and cellars where that light cannot be seen. Just as a mirror properly placed at the mouth of such a cave or cellar may enable those within to participate, at least to some extent, in the benefits of the light, so may we, when we see the light, reflect it to others who have so placed themselves that they cannot perceive it directly.

. No words that we can use can really give even the least idea of such an experience as that, for all with which our minds are

acquainted has long ago disappeared before that level is attained. There is of course at that level a sheath of some sort for the spirit, but it is impossible to describe it in any words. In one sense it seems as though it were an atom, and yet in another it seems to be the whole plane. Each man is a centre of consciousness and therefore must have some position; that focus in the stream of the life of the Logos must, one would say, be in one place or another. Yet he feels as if he were the whole plane and could focus anywhere, and wherever for the moment the outpouring of this force stops, that is for him a sheath. The man still feels absolutely himself, even though he is so much more; and he is able to distinguish others. He is able to recognise with perfect certainty the Great Ones whom he knows, yet it is rather by instinctive feeling than by any resemblance to anything that he has seen before; but if he focusses his consciousness upon one of These he gets the effect of the form of the man as he knows it in the Augoeides, two planes below.

THE TRIPLE SPIRIT

The Monads are clearly all centres of force in the Logos, and yet each possesses a very distinct individuality of his own. In the average man the monad is but little in touch with the ego and the lower personality, which are yet somehow expressions of him. . He knows from the first what is his object in evolution and he grasps the general trend of it, but until that portion of him which expresses itself in the ego has reached a fairly high stage, he is scarcely conscious of the details of life down here, or at any rate takes little interest in them. He seems at that stage not to know other monads, but rests in indescribable bliss without any active consciousness of surroundings. As evolution progresses, however, he grasps matters on the lower plane much more fully, and finally takes them entirely into his own hands, and at that stage he knows both himself and others, and his voice within us becomes for us the Voice of the Silence. That voice differs for us at different stages. For us now in this lower consciousness it is the voice of the ego; when we identify ourselves

with the ego it is the voice of the spirit; when we reach the spirit it is the voice of the monad, and when in the far-away future we identify ourselves wholly with the monad it will be the voice of the Logos; but in every case we have to subject the lower and rise above it, before the voice of the higher can be heard.

This monad resides permanently upon the second of our planes, and when he descends upon the third, the plane of nirvāna, he manifests himself as the triple spirit, and this triple spirit is a reflection or (even more truly) an expression of the Logos as He manifests Himself in our set of planes. His first manifestation on our highest plane is also triple. In the first of these three aspects He does not manifest Himself on any plane below the highest, but in the second He descends to the second plane and draws round Himself a garment of its matter, thus making a quite separate expression of Him. In the third aspect He descends to the upper portion of the third plane, and draws round Himself matter of that level, thus making a third manifestation. These three are the "three persons in one God," of which Christianity

teaches, telling us in its Athanasian creed that we should worship "One God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance"—that is to say, never confusing in our minds the work and function of the three separate manifestations, each on its own plane, yet never for a moment forgetting the eternal unity of the "substance," that which lives behind all alike on the highest plane, at the level where these three are one.

Now an exact repetition of this process takes place in the case of man, who is in very truth made in the image of God. The spirit is triple upon the third plane, and the first of its three manifestations does not descend below that level. The second manifestation descends one stage, on to the fourth plane, and clothes itself with its matter, and then we call it buddhi. Just as before, the third aspect descends two planes, and shrines itself in matter of the highest level of the mental plane, and we call that manas, and this trinity of ātma-buddhi-manas, manifesting in the causal body, is what we call the ego.

Never forget that the ego is not the manas

only, but the spiritual triad; at our present stage of evolution he rests in his causal body on the higher levels of the mental plane, but as he passes onwards his consciousness will be centred on the buddhic plane, and afterwards, when he attains adeptship, on the nirvānic. But it must not be supposed that when this further development takes place the manas is in any way lost. When the ego draws himself up into the buddhic plane, he draws up manas with him into that expression of manas which has all the time existed on the buddhic plane, but has not been fully vivified until now. In the same way when he draws himself up into the nirvānic plane, manas and buddhi exist within him just as fully as ever, so that now the triple spirit is in full manifestation on its own plane in all its three aspects. Therefore the spirit is truly seven-fold, for he is triple on his own plane, dual on the buddhic, and single on the mental, and the unity which is his synthesis makes seven. Though he draws back into the higher he retains the definiteness of the lower.

This is probably what Madame Blavatsky meant when she spoke of the auric egg, but she surrounded this idea with

great mystery, and it seems likely that she was under some pledge not to write freely about it. She never clearly explained the triple spirit, but evidently endeavoured to suggest the idea without clearly expressing it, for she laid great stress upon the fact that, just as the astral plane may be said to be a reflection of the buddhic, so may the physical be said to be a reflection of the nirvānic, and then she furthermore emphasised the fact that there are three bodies or vehicles of man on the physical plane—apparently going out of her way to make this agree, and for that purpose dividing the physical body of man into two parts, the dense and the etheric, and adding as a third principle the vitality which flows through them. Now as this vitality exists on all the planes, and might just as well be made into additional principles on the astral and mental planes as on the physical, it would seem that some reason is required for her rather peculiar arrangement, and perhaps this reason may be found in her desire to indicate the triple spirit without actually mentioning it. I think the President has said that when Madame Blavatsky spoke about the sacred auric egg

she meant the four permanent atoms within an envelope of matter of the nirvānic plane.

BUDDHIC CONSCIOUSNESS

A selfish man could not function on the buddhic plane, for the very essence of that plane is sympathy and perfect comprehension, which excludes selfishness. A man cannot make a buddhic body until he has conquered the lower planes. There is a close connection between the astral and the buddhic, the former being in some ways a reflection of the latter; but it must not therefore be supposed that a man can leap from the astral consciousness to the buddhic without developing the intervening vehicles.

Certainly on the highest levels of the buddhic plane a man becomes one with all others, but we must not therefore assume that he feels alike towards all. There is no reason to suppose that we shall ever feel absolutely alike towards everybody; why should we? Even the Lord BUDDHA had His favourite disciple Ānanda; even the Christ regarded S. John

the Beloved in a different way from the rest. What is true is that presently we shall come to love every one as much as we now love our nearest and dearest, but by that time we shall have developed for those nearest and dearest a type of love of which we have no conception now. The buddhic consciousness includes that of many others, so that you may put yourself down into another man and feel exactly as he does, looking upon him from within instead of from without. In that relation you will feel no shrinking even from an evil man, because you will recognise him as part of yourself—a weak part. You will desire to help him by pouring strength into that weak part of yourself. What is required is really to be in this attitude and to do it, not merely to talk about it or think vaguely of it; and it is not easy to acquire this power.

EXPERIENCE

It is not necessary for every ego to go through every experience, for when you

rise to the buddhic level you can gain the experience of others, even of those who have opposed progress. We shall feel by sympathy. We could withdraw if we did not want to feel another's suffering; but we should choose to feel it because we want to help. On the buddhic plane we enfold the man in our own consciousness, and though he knows nothing of such enfolding it will to a certain extent lessen his sufferings. In all probability we have all had most of the experiences of the savage and half-civilised stages. An adept would necessarily wish to remove or relieve suffering, but we may easily imagine a case in which he would see that the good which was being produced by the suffering so enormously outweighed the present pain that to interfere would not be kindness but cruelty to the sufferer. He would see the whole, not only the part. His sympathy would be deeper than ours, but he would not express it in action except when action was useful.

THE SPHERES

In any diagram which represents the various planes we usually draw them as lying one above the other like the shelves of a book-case. But then in explaining that diagram we are careful to say that this must not be taken literally, since all the planes interpenetrate and all of them are about us here all the time. That is perfectly true, and yet there is a sense in which the shelf-like arrangement is true also. We may perhaps draw an analogy from the condition of affairs which we find existing upon the surface of the physical earth. We may take the solid matter for all practical purposes as existing only under our feet, as the lowest stratum of physical matter, though of course it is true that countless millions of particles of solid matter are also floating in the air over our heads.

We may say that, roughly speaking, the liquid matter of the earth (chiefly water) lies upon the surface of the solid matter, though again it is true that a large amount of water interpenetrates the earth beneath us, and also that millions of tons of water are raised above the surface of the earth

in the form of clouds. Still, the great bulk of the liquid matter of the earth lies on the top of its solid matter in the form of the ocean, lakes and rivers. Then the gaseous matter of our earth (chiefly the atmosphere) lies upon the surface of the water and of the solid earth, and extends much further away into space than either the liquid or the solid.

All three conditions of matter exist here at the surface of the earth where we live, but the water in the form of clouds extends further above that surface than does ordinary dust, and again the air, though interpenetrating both the others, extends much further away still. This is by no means a bad analogy to explain the arrangement of the matter of the higher planes.

What we call our astral plane may also be considered as the astral body of the earth. It certainly exists all round us, and interpenetrates the solid earth beneath our feet, but it also extends far away above our heads, so that we may think of it as a huge ball of astral matter with the physical earth in the middle of it, much as the physical body of a man exists within the ovoid form which is filled with astral matter,

except that in the case of the earth the proportionate size of its astral body outside the physical is enormously greater than in the case of man. But just as in the case of the man the densest aggregation of astral matter is that which is within the periphery of the physical body, so in the case of the earth by far the greater part of its astral matter is gathered together within the limit of the physical sphere:

Nevertheless the portion of the astral sphere which is exterior to the physical extends nearly to the mean distance of the moon's orbit, so that the astral planes of the two worlds touch one another when the moon is in perigee, but do not so touch when the moon is in apogee. Incidentally it follows that at certain times of the month astral communication with the moon is possible, and at certain other times it is not.

The mental plane of our earth bears about the same proportion to the astral as the latter does to the physical. It also is a huge globe, concentric with the other two, interpenetrating them both, but extending much further from the centre than does the astral globe. It will be seen that the effect of this is that, while matter of all

the planes exists together down here, there is a certain amount of truth in the illustration of the shelves, for beyond the limit of the physical atmosphere there is a considerable shell which consists only of astral and mental matter, and outside of that again another similar shell which consists of mental matter only.

When we reach the buddhic plane the extension becomes so great that what we might call the buddhic bodies of the different planets of our chain meet one another, and so there is but one buddhic body for the whole chain, which means that in the buddhic vehicle it is possible to pass from one of these planets to another. I presume that when investigations in a similar way are extended to the nirvānic plane it will be found that that matter extends so much further that other chains are included in it as well—perhaps the entire solar system.

All this is true as far as it goes, and yet it does not convey a really accurate idea of the true position of affairs, because of the fact that our minds can grasp only three dimensions, whereas in reality there are many more, and as we raise our consciousness

from plane to plane, each step opens before us the possibility of comprehending one more of these dimensions. This makes it difficult to describe exactly the position of those who have passed away from the physical life to other planes. Some of such people tend to hover round their earthly homes, in order to keep in touch with their friends of the physical life and the places which they know ; others, on the other hand, have a tendency to float away and to find for themselves, as if by specific gravity, a level much further removed from the surface of the earth.

The average person passing into the heaven-life, for example,- tends to float at a considerable distance above the surface of the earth, although on the other hand some of such men are drawn to our level. Still, broadly speaking, the inhabitants of the heaven-world may be thought of as living in a sphere or ring or zone round the earth. What Spiritualists call the summer-land extends many miles above our heads, and as people of the same race and the same religion tend to keep together after death just as they do during life, we have what may be described as a

kind of network of summer-lands over the countries to which belong the people who have created them.

People find their own level on the astral plane, much in the same way as objects floating in the ocean do. This does not mean that they cannot rise and fall at will, but that if no special effort is made they come to their level and remain there. Astral matter gravitates towards the centre of the earth just as physical matter does; both obey the same general laws. We may take it that the sixth sub-plane of the astral is partially coincident with the surface of the earth, while the lowest or seventh penetrates some distance into the interior.

The conditions of the interior of our earth are not easy to describe. Vast cavities exist in it, and there are races inhabiting these cavities, but they are not of the same evolution as ourselves. One of these evolutions, which is at a level distinctly lower than any race now existing upon the surface of the earth, is to some extent described in the seventeenth life of Alcyone, published recently in *The Theosophist*; the other is more nearly at our level, yet utterly different from anything that we know.

As the centre of the earth is approached, matter is found to exist in a state not readily comprehensible to those who have not seen it; a state in which it is far denser than the densest metal known to us, and yet flows as readily as water. But yet there is something else within even that. Such matter is far too dense for any forms of life that we know, but nevertheless it has connected with it an evolution of its own.

The tremendous pressures which exist here are utilised by the Third Logos for the manufacture of new elements; in fact, the central portions of the earth may with great truth be regarded as His laboratory, for temperatures and pressures are obtainable there of which we on the surface have no conception. It is there that, under His direction, troops of devas and nature-spirits of a particular type combine and separate, arrange and rearrange the ultimate physical atoms, working along the wonderful double spiral which is symbolised in Sir William Crookes' lemniscates. From this point also, incredible as it seems to us, there is a direct connection with the heart of the sun, so that elements made there

appear in the centre of the earth without passing through what we call the surface; but it is useless to speak of this until the higher dimensions of space are more generally understood. As in the case of the physical, the densest astral matter is far too dense for the ordinary forms of astral life; but that also has other forms of its own which are quite unknown to students of the surface.

In investigating the interior of the earth we did not find a central shaft running from pole to pole, such as has been described by some mediums, nor did we find a number of concentric spheres resting upon cushions of steam. At the same time there are certain forces which do play through concentric layers, and it is not difficult to see what were the natural phenomena which deceived those who, in perfect good faith, made that statement.

There is unquestionably a force of etheric pressure just as there is of atmospheric pressure, and it can be utilised by man as soon as he can discover some material which is ether-proof. The same pressure exists in the astral world. The most ordinary example of this is what happens when a man leaves his body in sleep or in death.

When the astral body is withdrawn from the physical, we must not suppose that that physical body is left without an astral counterpart. The pressure of the surrounding astral matter—and that really means the action of the force of gravitation on the astral plane—immediately forces other astral matter into that astrally empty space, just as, if we create a vortex and draw out the air from a room, other air flows in instantly from the surrounding atmosphere. But that astral matter will correspond with curious accuracy to the physical matter which it interpenetrates. Every variety of physical matter attracts astral matter of corresponding density, so that solid physical matter is interpenetrated by what we may call solid astral matter—that is, matter of the lowest astral sub-plane; whereas physical liquid is interpenetrated by matter of the next astral sub-plane—astral liquid; while physical gas in turn attracts its particular correspondence—matter of the third astral sub-plane from the bottom, which might be called astral gas.

Take the case of a glass of water; the tumbler (being solid matter) is interpene-

trated by astral matter of the lowest sub-plane; the water in the tumbler (being liquid matter) is interpenetrated by astral matter of the second sub-plane, counting from the bottom upwards; while the air which surrounds both (being gaseous matter) is interpenetrated by astral matter of the third sub-plane, counting from the bottom upwards.

We must also realise that just as all these things, the tumbler, the water, and the air, are interpenetrated by physical ether, so are their astral correspondences further interpenetrated by the variety of astral matter which corresponds to the different types of ether. So when a man withdraws his astral body from the physical there is an inrush of all three varieties of astral matter, because man's physical body is composed of solid, liquid and gaseous constituents. Of course there is ether in the physical body as well, so there must also be astral matter of the higher sub-planes to correspond to that.

The temporary astral counterpart formed during the absence of the real astral body is thus an exact copy of it so far as arrangement is concerned, but it has no

real connection with the physical body, and could never be used as a vehicle. It is constructed of any astral matter of the required kind that happens to be handy; it is merely a fortuitous concurrence of atoms, and when the true astral body returns it pushes out this other astral matter without the slightest opposition. This is one reason for the extreme care which ought to be exercised as to the surroundings in which we sleep, for if those surroundings are evil, astral matter of the most objectionable type may fill our physical bodies while we are away from them, leaving behind it an influence which cannot but react horribly upon the real man when he returns. But the instant in-rush when the body is abandoned shows the existence of astral pressure.

In the same way, when the man has finally left his physical body at death, what he leaves is no longer a vehicle, but a corpse—not in any true sense a body at all, but simply a collection of disintegrating material in the shape of a body. Just as we can no longer call that truly a body, so we cannot call the astral matter which interpenetrates it truly a counterpart in the

ordinary sense of the word. Take an imperfect yet perhaps helpful analogy. When the cylinder of an engine is full of steam, we may regard the steam as the living force within the cylinder, which makes the engine move. But when the engine is cold and at rest, the cylinder is not necessarily empty; it may be filled with air; yet that air is not its appropriate living force, though it occupies the same position as did the steam.

Astral matter is never *really* solid at all—only relatively solid. You know that the mediæval alchemists always symbolised astral matter by water, and one of the reasons for that was its fluidity and penetrability. It is true that the counterpart of any solid physical object is always matter of the lowest astral sub-plane, which for convenience we often call astral solid matter; but we must not therefore endow it with the qualities with which we are familiar in solids on this plane. The particles in that densest kind of astral matter are further apart relatively to their size than even gaseous particles; so that it would be easier for two of the densest astral bodies to pass through each other than it would be for the lightest physical gas to diffuse itself in the air.

On the astral plane one has not the sense of jumping over a precipice, but simply of floating over it. If you are standing upon the ground, part of your astral body interpenetrates the ground under your feet; but through your astral body you would not be conscious of this fact by anything corresponding to a sense of hardness, or by any difference in your power of motion. Remember that upon the astral plane there is no sense of touch that corresponds to ours upon the physical. One never touches the surface of anything, so as to feel it hard or soft, rough or smooth, hot or cold; but on coming into contact with the interpenetrating substance one would be conscious of a different rate of vibration, which might of course be pleasant or unpleasant, stimulating or depressing. When on awakening in the morning we remember anything corresponding to our ordinary sense of touch, it is only that in bringing the remembrance through, the physical brain adopted the means of expression to which we are accustomed.

Though the light of all planes comes from the sun, yet the effect which it produces on the astral plane is entirely different from that on the physical. In astral life there

is a diffused luminosity, not obviously coming from any special direction. All astral matter is in itself luminous, and an astral body is not like a painted sphere, but rather a sphere of living fire. It is also transparent, and there are no shadows. It is never dark in the astral world. The passing of a physical cloud between us and the sun makes no difference whatever to the astral plane, nor of course does the shadow of the earth which we call night.

The invisible helper would not pass through a mountain, if he thought of it as an obstacle; to learn that it is not an obstacle is precisely the object of one part of what is called 'the test of earth.' There cannot be an accident on the astral plane in our sense of the word, because the astral body, being fluidic, cannot be destroyed or permanently injured, as the physical body can. An explosion on the astral plane might be temporarily as disastrous as an explosion of gunpowder on the physical, but the astral fragments would quickly collect themselves again.

People on the astral plane can and do pass through one another constantly, and through fixed astral objects. Remember

that on the astral plane matter is so much more fluidic and so much less densely aggregated. There never can be anything like what we mean by a collision, and under ordinary circumstances two bodies which interpenetrate are not even appreciably affected. If, however, the interpenetration lasts for some time, as it does, for example, when two persons sit side by side through a service in a church or a performance in a theatre, a considerable effect may be produced.

There are many currents which tend to carry about persons who are lacking in will, and even those who have will but do not know how to use it. During physical life the matter of our astral bodies is constantly in motion, while after death, unless the will is exercised for the purpose of preventing it, it is arranged in concentric shells with a crust of the coarsest matter on the outside. If a man wishes to be of service on the astral, this shelling must be prevented, for those whose astral bodies have been thus re-arranged are confined to one level. If the re-arrangement has already occurred, the first thing that is done when a person is taken in hand is to break up that condition and set him free on the

whole of the astral plane. For those who are acting as invisible helpers on the astral plane there are no separate levels; it is all one.

In India the idea of service on the astral plane is not so widely known as in the West; the idea of service to God for the attainment of liberation is more prominent than that of service to one's fellow-men. Atmospheric and climatic conditions make practically no difference to work on the astral and mental planes. But being in a big city does make a great difference, on account of the masses of thought-forms. Some psychics require a temperature of about eighty degrees in order to do their best work, while others do not work well except at a lower temperature.

If necessary, occult work can be done anywhere, but some places afford greater facilities than others. For example, California has a very dry climate with much electricity in the air, which is favourable for the development of clairvoyance. Here in Adyar there is no resistance to our thought-forms on account of the environment, because we are all thinking more or less along the same lines. But we must re-

member that there may always be resistance on the part of the person to whom we are sending thoughts, for some persons have for a whole life-time built round themselves such shells of selfishness that one cannot penetrate them even when one wishes to do them good.

Fifth Section

The Ego and His Vehicles

FIFTH SECTION

THE EGO AND THE PERSONALITY

There are still many of our members who do not fully understand the problem of the higher and the lower self. Nor is this wonderful; for we are repeatedly told that there is only one consciousness, and yet we often clearly feel two, so it is not remarkable that students should be uncertain as to the real relation between these two, and should wonder whether the ego is entirely dissociated from his physical body and has an existence of his own among his fellows on his own plane.

This problem of the lower and higher self is an old one, and it is undoubtedly difficult to realise that there is after all only one consciousness, and that the apparent difference is caused only by the limitations of the various vehicles. The whole consciousness

works on its own higher mental plane, but in the case of the ordinary man only partially and vaguely as yet. So far as it is active it is always on the side of good, because it desires that which is favourable to its evolution as a soul. It ~~puts~~ a portion of itself down into lower matter, and that portion becomes so much more keenly and vividly conscious in that matter that it thinks and acts as though it were a separate being, forgetting its connection with that less developed yet far wider self-consciousness above. So sometimes it seems as though the fragment worked against the whole; but the man who is instructed declines to be deluded, and reaches back through the keen alert consciousness of the fragment to the true consciousness behind, which is as yet so little developed.

Undoubtedly the ego is only very partially expressed by his physical body, yet we should not be accurate in speaking of him as dissociated from that body. If we figure the ego as a solid body and the physical plane as a surface, the solid body if laid upon that surface could manifest itself through that surface only as a plane

figure, which would obviously be an exceedingly partial expression. We can see also that if the various sides of the solid were laid upon the surface successively we might obtain expressions which differed considerably, though all of them would be imperfect, because in all cases the solid would have an extension in an entirely different direction, which could by no means be expressed in the two dimensions of the superficies. We shall obtain a nearly accurate symbolism of the facts as far as the ordinary man is concerned if we suppose the solid to be conscious only so far as it is in contact with the surface, although the results gained through the manifestation of such consciousness would inhere in the solid as a whole, and would be present in any later expression of it, even though that might differ considerably from previous expressions.

It is only in the case of those already somewhat advanced that we can speak of the ego as having a conscious existence among his fellows on his own plane. From the moment that he breaks off from his group-soul and commences his separate existence, he is a conscious entity; but

the consciousness is of an exceedingly vague nature. The only physical sensation to which it is at all comparable is that which occasionally comes to some persons at the moment of awakening in the morning. There is a state intermediate between sleeping and waking in which a man is blissfully conscious that he exists, and yet is not conscious of any surrounding objects, not capable of any movement. Indeed, he sometimes knows that any movement would break the spell of happiness and bring him down into the ordinary waking world, and so he endeavours to remain still as long as possible.

That condition—a consciousness of existence and of intense bliss—closely resembles that of the ego of the average man upon the higher mental plane. He is wholly centred there only for the short time which intervenes between the end of one life in the heaven-world and the commencement of his next descent into incarnation; and during that short period there comes to him the flash of retrospect and prospect—a glimpse of what his last life has done for him, and of what his next life is intended to do. For many ages these glimpses are his only

moments of full awakening, and it is his desire for a more perfect manifestation, his desire to feel himself more thoroughly alive and active, which drives him into the effort of incarnation. It is not desire for life in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather for that complete consciousness which involves the power to respond to all possible vibrations from the surroundings on every plane, so that he may attain the perfection of sympathy.

When the ego is still undeveloped the forces of the higher mental plane pass through him practically without affecting him, as he cannot respond to more than a very few of these extremely fine vibrations. It needs powerful and comparatively coarse vibrations to affect him at first, and these do not exist upon his own plane, and for that reason he has to put himself down to lower levels in order to find them. Therefore full consciousness comes to him at first only in the lowest and densest of his vehicles, his attention being focussed for a long time down in the physical plane ; so that, although that plane is so much lower than his own and offers so much less scope for activity, in those early stages he feels himself much

more alive when he is working there. As the consciousness increases and widens its scope he gradually begins to work more and more in matter one stage higher—that is, in astral matter.

At a much later stage, when he has attained to clear working in astral matter, he begins to be able also to express himself through the matter of his mental body, and the end of his present effort is achieved when he works as fully and clearly in the matter of the causal body on the higher mental plane as he does now on the physical plane.

These stages of full development of consciousness must not be confounded with the mere learning to use to some extent the respective vehicles. A man is using his astral body whenever he expresses an emotion; he is using his mental body whenever he thinks. But that is very far from being able to utilise either of them as independent vehicles through which consciousness can be fully expressed. When a man is fully conscious in his astral body, he has already made a considerable amount of progress; when he has bridged over the chasm between the astral consciousness and the physical, day

and night no longer exist for him, since he leads a life unbroken in its continuity. For him death also has ceased to exist, since he carries that unbroken consciousness not only through night and day, but also through the portals of death itself and up to the end of his life upon the astral plane.

One step of further development lies open to him—the consciousness of the heaven-world; and then his life and memory are continuous during the whole of each descent into incarnation. Yet one step more raises the full consciousness to the level of the ego on the higher mental plane, and after that he has always with him the memory of all his lives, and he is capable of consciously directing the various lower manifestations of himself at all points of his progress.

It must not be supposed that the development of any of these stages of consciousness is ever sudden. The actual rending of the veil between two stages is usually a fairly rapid process, sometimes even instantaneous. A man who has normally no memory of what happens on the astral plane may unintentionally, by some accident or illness, or intentionally by certain definite practices,

bridge over the interval and make the connection, so that from that time onward his astral consciousness will be continuous, and his memory of what happens while the physical body is asleep will therefore be perfect. But long before such an effort or accident is possible for him the full consciousness must have been working in the astral body, even though in the physical life he knew nothing of it.

In exactly the same way a man must have been for a long time thoroughly practised in the use of his mental body as a vehicle before he can hope to break the barrier between that and the astral, so that he can have the pleasure of continuous recollection. By analogy this leads us to see that the ego must have been fully conscious and active on his own plane for a long time before any knowledge of that existence can come through to us in our physical life.

There are many in whom the ego has already to some extent awakened from the condition of mere bliss which was described above, and is at least partially conscious of his own surroundings, and therefore of other egos. From that time on he

leads a life and has interests and activities on his own plane; but even then we must remember that he puts down into the personality only a very small part of himself, and that that part constantly becomes entangled in interests which, because they are so partial, are often along different lines from the general activities of the ego himself, who consequently does not pay any particular attention to the lower life of the personality, unless something rather unusual happens to it.

When this stage is reached he usually comes under the influence of a Master; indeed often his first clear consciousness of anything outside himself is his touch with that Master. The tremendous power of the Master's influence magnetises him, draws his vibrations into harmony with its own, and multiplies manifold the rate of his development. It rays upon him like sunshine upon a flower, and he evolves rapidly under its influence. This is why, while the earlier stages of progress are so slow as to be almost imperceptible, when the Master turns His attention upon the man, develops him and arouses his

own will to take part in the work, the speed of his advancement increases in geometrical progression.

Of that stream of divine influence poured upon the ego by the Master, the amount which can be passed on to the personality depends upon the connection between it and the ego, which is very different in different cases. There is almost infinite variety in human life. The spiritual force rays upon the ego, and some little of it certainly comes through into the personality, because though the ego has put forth a part of himself he does not cut himself off entirely from it, notwithstanding the fact that in the case of all ordinary people the ego and the personality are very different things.

The ego in ordinary men has not much grasp of the personality, nor a clear conception of his purpose in sending it forth; and, again, the small piece which meets us in the personality grows to have ways and opinions of its own. It is developing by the experience which it gains, and this is passed on to the ego; but along with this real development it usually gathers a good deal which is hardly worthy of that

name. It acquires knowledge, but also prejudices, which are not really knowledge at all. It does not become quite free from these prejudices—not only of knowledge (or rather its absence) but of feeling and action as well—until the man reaches adeptship. It gradually discovers these things to be prejudices, and progresses through them; but it has always a great deal of limitation from which the ego is entirely free.

As to the amount of the spiritual force which is passed on to the personality, one can only decide in a particular case by using clairvoyance. But something of it must flow through always, because the lower is attached to the higher, just as the hand is attached to the body by the arm. It is certain that the personality must get something, but it can have only what it has made itself able to receive. It is also a question of qualities. The Master often plays upon qualities in the ego which are much obscured in the personality, and in that case of course very little comes down. As only those experiences of the personality can be handed on to the spiritual or permanent ego which are compatible with his nature and interests, so only those im-

pulses to which it is able to respond can express themselves in the personality. Remember, though, that the former tends to exclude the bad and the latter the good—or rather we should call them the material and the spiritual, for nothing is bad.

One may sometimes see by clairvoyance many of these influences at work. On a certain day, for example, we may see a characteristic of the personality much intensified, with no outward reason. The cause is often to be found in what is taking place at some higher level—the stimulation of that quality in the ego. Sometimes a man finds himself overflowing with affection or devotion, and quite unable on the physical plane to understand why. The cause is usually, again, the stimulation of the ego, or it may be that the ego is taking some special interest in the personality for the time being.

In meditation we sometimes draw such attention on the part of the ego, though it is well to keep in mind that we must try to reach up to join that higher activity, rather than to interrupt it to draw down its attention to the lower. The higher influence is certainly invited by right meditation, which is *always* effective, even

though on the physical plane things may seem to be very dull and quite without zest. The reaching upwards of the ego himself often means his neglect to send energy down to the personality, and this, of course, leaves the latter feeling rather dull and in the shade. The extent, then, to which the personality is influenced by the effort of the Master depends upon two things principally—the strength of the connection at the time between the ego and the personality; and the particular work which the Master is doing upon the ego, that is, the particular qualities upon which He is playing.

Meditation and the study of spiritual subjects in this earthly life make a very great difference in the life of the ego. The ordinary person who has not taken up spiritual matters seriously has only a thread of connection between the higher and the lower self. The personality in his case seems to be all, and the ego, though he undoubtedly exists on his own plane, is not at all likely to be doing anything actively there. He is very much like a chicken which is growing inside an egg. But in the case of some of us who have been

making efforts in the right direction, we may hope that the ego is becoming quite vividly conscious. He has broken through his shell, and is living a life of great activity and power. As we go on, we shall become able to unify our personal consciousness with the life of the ego, as far as that is possible, and then we shall have only the one consciousness; even down here we shall have the consciousness of the ego, who will know all that is going on. But with many people at the present day there is often considerable opposition between the personality and the ego.

There are other things to be taken into account. It is by no means always accurate to judge the ego by his manifestation in the personality. An ego of intensely practical type may make much more show on the physical plane than another of far higher development, if the energy of the latter happens to be concentrated almost exclusively upon the causal or buddhic levels. Therefore people who see only on the physical plane are frequently entirely wrong in their estimation of the relative position of others.

If you have to deal with a fairly advanced ego, you will sometimes find him rather

inconsiderate of his body. You see, whatever is put down into the personality is so much taken from *him*! I have again and again seen cases in which the ego was to some extent impatient and withdrew into himself somewhat; but on the other hand in cases such as these there is always a flow between the ego and the personality, which is not possible with the ordinary man. In the ordinary man the part is, as it were, put down and left, though not of course quite cut off; but at this more advanced stage there is a constant communication between the two along the channel. Therefore, the ego can withdraw a great deal of himself whenever he chooses, and leave a very poor representation of the real man behind. So the relations between the lower and the higher self vary much in different people and at different stages of development.

As to the work of the ego, he may be learning things on his own plane; or he may be helping other egos—there are many kinds of work for which he may need an accession of strength. And then he may forget for a time to pay his personality proper attention, just as even a good man

may occasionally, under some special pressure of business, forget his horse or his dog. Sometimes when that happens the personality reminds him of its existence by blundering into some foolishness which causes serious suffering. You may have noticed that sometimes, after you have completed a special piece of work that has needed the co-operation of the ego to a large extent—as, for example, lecturing to a large audience—he takes away the energy and leaves the personality with only enough to feel rather dispirited. For a time he admitted that there was some importance in the work, and therefore poured down a little more of himself, but afterwards he leaves the poor personality feeling rather depressed.

Of course, depression comes much more often from other reasons, such as the presence of an astral entity in a low-spirited condition, or of some non-human beings. And joy also is not always due to the influence of the ego, for the fact is that the man does not think much about his own feelings when he is in a fit condition to receive an influx of power. Joy may be produced by the proximity of harmonious nature-spirits, or in a variety of other ways.

The channel between the ego and personality is by no means always open. Sometimes it appears to be almost choked up—a condition of affairs which is quite a possibility in view of its narrowness in most cases. Then the force may break through again on some occasion, such as that of a conversion. But for many of us there is a constant flow in some measure. Meditation, conscientiously done, opens the channel and keeps it open. Always remember, though, that it is better to try to go up to the ego than to bring it down to the personality.

Every ego has a certain knowledge of his own. He obtains a glimpse, between lives, of his past and future; in the undeveloped man this awakens the ego for a moment, after which he falls asleep again. During physical life the ordinary ego is to some extent capable of brooding watchfulness and a little effort, but is still in a sleepy condition. With a developed man the ego is fully awake. The ego in course of time discovers that there are a good many things which he can do, and when this happens he may rise into a condition in which he has a definite life on his own plane, though

in many cases it is even then but dreamy. It is the ego's purpose to learn to be fully active on all planes, even the physical.

Suppose you have an ego whose principal method of manifesting himself is by affection. That quality is what he wants exhibited by his personality, and if you down here try to feel strong affection and make a speciality of that, the ego will promptly throw more of himself down into the personality, because he finds in it exactly what he desires. Be careful to provide what he needs, and he will quickly take advantage of it. Egos on their own plane can help other egos, when they are sufficiently developed to do so. The ego of the ordinary person has rather a vegetable consciousness or life, and seems to be only just aware of other egos. The personality will not know what the ego does, unless they have been unified. The ego may know the Master while the personality does not. The study of inner things, and living the life, wakes up the ego. Purely unselfish devotion belongs to the higher planes and concerns him.

I do not think the experiences of the personality can be transmitted to the ego,

but the essence of them may. He cares little for the details, but he wants the essence of it. Any of those thoughts that we consider evil are impossible for the ego. For precise definition he must come down into the physical body. He devotes himself more especially during the heaven-life to the assimilation of the experiences of the personality, but he is doing it all the time. When you take up the study of Theosophy, and live the life, you begin to call the attention of the ego by sending up vibrations to which he can respond. The ordinary man has in his life little that appeals to the ego.

High unselfish affection and devotion belong to the highest astral sub-plane, and these reflect themselves in the corresponding matter of the mental plane, so that they touch the causal, not the lower mental. Thus only unselfish thoughts affect the ego. All the lower thoughts affect the permanent atoms, but not the ego; and corresponding to them you would find gaps in the causal body, not bad colours. Selfishness below shows in it as absence of affection or sympathy, and when the good quality develops the gap will be filled

up. In the causal body you can see whether a man can possibly fail in this or that quality. Try to develope the qualities the ego wants, and he will come down to help.

As is said in *Light on the Path*, watch for the ego, and let him fight through you, and yet at the same time never forget that you are the ego. Therefore identify yourself with him and make the lower give way to you the higher. Yet do not be too greatly disheartened if you should fall even many times, for even failure is to a certain extent a success, since we learn by it and so are wiser to meet the next problem. We cannot always succeed now at every point, though we surely shall do so ultimately. But never forget that it is not expected of us that we shall always succeed, but only that we shall do our best.

COUNTERPARTS

When the ego descends into incarnation, he draws round himself a mass of astral matter, not yet formed into a definite astral

body ; this takes, in the first place, the shape of that ovoid which is the nearest expression that we can realise of the true shape of the causal body. But when the further step downward and outward into physical incarnation is taken, and a little physical body is formed in the midst of that astral matter, it immediately begins to exert a violent attraction over it, so that the great majority of the astral matter (which previously may be thought of as fairly evenly distributed over the large oval) now becomes concentrated into the periphery of that physical body.

As the physical body grows, the astral matter follows its every change, and thus we find man presenting the spectacle of an astral body, ninety-nine per cent of which is compressed within the periphery of his physical body, only about the remaining one per cent filling the rest of the ovoid form. In the plates in *Man, Visible and Invisible* we have sketched in the outline of the physical body merely in pencil, so that it shows but slightly, because my especial desire in that book was to emphasise the colours of the ovoid, and the way in which they illustrate the development of

man by the transfer of vibrations from the lower bodies to the higher; but in reality that astral counterpart of the physical body is very solid and definite, and quite clearly distinguishable from the surrounding ovoid.

Note, therefore, that the astral matter takes the exact form of the physical matter merely because of the attraction which the latter has for the former. But we must further realise that although we may speak of the lowest sub-plane of the astral as corresponding to solid physical matter, it is yet very different in texture, for all astral matter bears to its corresponding physical matter something the same sort of relation that the liquid bears to the solid. Therefore the particles of the astral body, whether in the finest or coarsest parts of it, are constantly in motion among themselves, just as are the particles of flowing water; and it will consequently be seen that it is quite impossible for the astral body to possess specialised organs in the same sense as does the physical body.

No doubt there is an exact counterpart in astral matter of the rods and cones which make up the retina of the physical eye; but the particles which at one moment are

occupying that particular position in an astral body may, a second or two later, be moving through the hand or the foot. One does not, therefore, see upon the astral plane by means of the astral counterpart of the physical eyes, nor does one hear with the astral counterpart of the physical ears; indeed, it is perhaps not exactly correct to apply the terms 'seeing' and 'hearing' to astral methods of cognisance, since these terms are commonly held to imply specialised sense-organs, whereas the fact is that every particle in the astral body is capable of receiving and transmitting vibrations from one of its own type, but its own type only. Thus when one obtains a glimpse of astral consciousness, one is surprised to find oneself able to see on all sides simultaneously, instead of only in front as one does on the physical plane. The exact correspondence of the astral body to the physical therefore is merely a matter of external form, and does not at all involve any similarity of function in the various organs.

But the attraction continued all through life sets up a kind of habit or momentum in the astral matter, which causes it to retain the same form even while it is withdrawn tempo-

rarily from the attraction of the physical body at night and permanently after death ; so that even through the long astral life the lineaments of the physical body which was put aside at death will still be preserved almost unchanged. Almost—because we must not forget that thought has a powerful influence upon astral matter and can readily mould it, so that a man who habitually thinks of himself after death as younger than he actually was at the time of that death will gradually come to present a somewhat younger appearance.

A questioner asks, "If the arm of a man, the branch of a tree, or the leg of a chair were cut off, would in each case the astral counterpart also be removed, and can we, by breaking an astral counterpart, produce a fracture in a physical object? That is to say, if with the hand of my astral body I break the astral counterpart of a chair, will the physical chair also be broken?"

The three cases given are not quite analogous. Both the tree and the man have the life within them which makes the astral body in each case a coherent whole. It is strongly attracted by the particles of the physical body, and therefore adapts itself to

its shape, but if part of that physical body be removed, the coherence of the living astral matter is stronger than the attraction towards that severed portion of the physical. Consequently the astral counterpart of the arm or branch will not be carried away with the severed physical fragment. Since it has acquired the habit of keeping that particular form, it will continue for a short time to retain the original shape, but will soon withdraw within the limits of the maimed form.

In the case of an inanimate body, such as a chair or a basin, there would not be the same kind of individual life to maintain cohesion. Consequently when the physical object was broken the astral counterpart would also be divided; but it would not be possible to break an astral counterpart, and in that way to affect the physical object. In other words the act of fraction must begin on the physical plane.

One could of course move a purely astral object by means of an astral hand if one wished, but not the astral counterpart of a physical object. In order to perform this latter feat it would be necessary to materialise a hand and move the physical object,

when the astral counterpart would of course accompany it. The astral counterpart is there because the physical object is there, just as the scent of a rose fills the room because the rose is there. To suggest that by moving the astral counterpart one could also move the physical object is like suggesting that by moving the smell one could move the physical rose which causes the smell.

The astral body changes its particles as does the physical, but fortunately the clumsy and tiresome process of cooking, eating and digesting food is not a necessity on the astral plane. The particles which fall away are replaced by others from the surrounding atmosphere. The purely physical cravings of hunger and thirst no longer exist there; but the desire of the glutton to gratify the sensation of taste, and the desire of the drunkard for the exhilaration which follows, for him, the absorption of alcohol—these are both astral, and therefore they still persist, and cause great suffering because of the absence of the physical body through which alone they could be satisfied.

So far as we are at present aware the astral body does not appear to be susceptible to fatigue.

The ordinary man while possessing a physical body naturally never has the opportunity of working for any length of time consecutively upon the astral plane, for his nights of astral work alternate with days of physical work. I knew, however, of one case of a man who, having the right to take a rapid reincarnation, had to wait upon the astral plane twenty-five years for the special conditions which he required. He spent the whole of this time in working for the help of others, without any intermission except the occasional attendance at classes held by pupils of our Masters; and he assured me that he had never felt the slightest sense of fatigue—that in fact he had forgotten what it meant to be tired.

We all know that excessive or long-continued emotion tires us very quickly in ordinary life, and since emotion is an expression of the astral, that may perhaps lead some to suppose that fatigue of the astral body is possible. I think, however, that it will be found that what is subject to fatigue is merely the physical organism through which everything in us which manifests on this plane must pass. What we call mental

fatigue is a parallel case. There is no such thing as fatigue of the *mind*; what we call by that name is only fatigue of the physical brain through which that mind has to express itself.

A spectator who has not been able to raise his sight above the astral level will of course see only astral matter when he looks at the aura of his fellow-men. He will see that this astral matter not only surrounds the physical body but also interpenetrates it, and that within the periphery of that body it is much more densely aggregated than in that part of the aura which lies outside. This is due to the attraction of the large amount of dense astral matter which is gathered together there as the counterpart of the cells of the physical body.

When during sleep the astral body is drawn from the physical this arrangement still persists, and then any one looking at the astral body with clairvoyant vision would still see, just as before, a form resembling the physical body surrounded by an aura. That form would now be composed only of astral matter, but still the great difference in density between it and

its surrounding mist would be quite sufficient to make it clearly distinguishable, even though it is itself only a form of denser mist.

There is a considerable difference in appearance between the evolved and the unevolved man. Even in the case of the latter the features and shape of the inner form are recognisable always, though blurred and indistinct; but the surrounding egg scarcely deserves the name, for it is in fact a mere shapeless wreath of mist, having neither regularity nor permanence of outline.

In the more developed man the change is very marked, both in the aura and the form within it. This latter is much more distinct and definite—a closer reproduction of the man's physical appearance; while instead of the floating mist-wreath we see a sharply defined ovoid form preserving its shape unaffected amidst all the varied currents which are always swirling around it on the astral plane. Though the arrangement of the astral body is largely changed after death by the action of the desire-elemental, such alteration does not in any way affect the recognisability of the form

within the egg, though the natural changes which take place tend on the whole to make the form grow somewhat fainter and more spiritual in appearance as time passes on.

COLOURS IN THE ASTRAL BODY

Any comparatively permanent colour in the astral body means a persistent vibration, which in the course of time produces its effect upon the mental body, and also upon the causal body, so that the higher qualities developed by the life on the lower planes are gradually built into the permanent causal body, and so become qualities of the soul itself. The colours may be mingled to any extent; for example, affection (rose) mingled with religious devotion (blue) will give a lovely violet. It is only the *good* thought or feeling which can produce an effect in the causal body, and so be permanently stored up as part of the man. Other kinds of thought and feeling remain in the lower vehicles and are comparatively impermanent. The size of a thought-form shows the strength of the emotion.

THE CAUSAL BODY

No number of physical bodies could fully contain the causal body, any more than any number of lines can make a square, or any number of squares a cube. The ego puts himself down into his various bodies with the hope of gaining two things—to make the causal body learn to respond to more vibrations, and also to increase its size. Most people are not more than just conscious in the causal body. The strings of such egos cannot be played upon directly, but are affected from below by way of overtones. Most men can at present only work on the matter of the third sub-plane of the mental (the lowest part of their causal bodies), and indeed only the lower matter even of that is usually in operation. When they are on the Path, the second sub-plane opens up. The adept uses the whole causal body while his consciousness is on the physical plane. A rough and ready way of deciding at what stage a man stands is to look at the causal body. It shows also how he arrived there. Men develope unequally—we are all undeveloped in some way. An animal has a minimum-sized causal body as soon as

he is individualised; then it has to be developed both as to size and colour.

THE DESIRE-ELEMENTAL

Much of the matter of the astral body is vivified by elemental essence, which is cut off for the time being from the general mass which belongs to the plane, and becomes the man's expression on that plane. This is a living, though not an intelligent essence. But it has a kind of instinct which Mr. Siunett calls "dawning intelligence," which guides it into getting what it wants. Blindly and without reason, but instinctively, it seeks its ends, and shows great ingenuity in obtaining its desires and in furthering its evolution.

Evolution for it is a descent into matter; its aim is to become a mineral monad. Therefore, its object in life is to get as near to the physical plane as it can, to come into contact with as many of the vibrations of the coarser kind as possible. It knows nothing of *you*; it could not know or imagine anything of *you*; but it does realise that it

is apart from the general stock, and that it is good to be apart. It is not a devil, and you must not get the idea that it is to be hated.

It is part of the Divine Life, just as you are ; but its interests are diametrically opposed to yours. *It* wants to evolve downwards ; *you* want to evolve upwards. It desires to preserve its separate life, and it feels that it can do so only by means of its connection with you. It is conscious of a something which is your lower mind, and realises that if it can englobe, as it were, this mind, and persuade you that its and your interests are one, you will increasingly supply it with the sensations it desires. When it gets the matter sufficiently entangled to suit its purpose, you cannot then withdraw it, the result being that some of this matter of the lower mind is then lost to you altogether in the life after death.

So, you see, here is the desire-elemental seeking its own ends ; not knowing that it is injuring you by trying to entangle your lower mind. The more it can do this the better for it, for the more mental matter it can entangle the longer will be its astral life—that life still enduring even after you

have passed into the heaven-world. In Theosophical phraseology it is then known as the shade. *Your* business is not to allow yourself to be deceived; *it* understands nothing of your evolution, and is not responsible for it; it simply tries to turn you to its own purpose. You ought to understand the situation, and refuse to be drawn. Do let us realise this: that this elemental is not ourselves. It is never *you* who desire these lower things, but this creature.

It is not so much that we have to make a great fight against it, but we should shake ourselves free, saying: "This is not I; I do not want this lower thing." Somebody wants it. Yes, it is this elemental; and you are responsible for its likes and wants, for in your last life you made it what it is. Not that this particular collection of astral matter and elemental essence existed then; it did not, for it was newly gathered together at your birth this time. But it is an exact reproduction of the matter in your astral body at the end of your last astral life. Nevertheless it is not you; and you must ever bear this in mind all through life, and even more during the life after death, for then it

has still greater power to deceive you.

But you may think that by thus refusing to allow it to influence you, you are checking its evolution. Not at all. You are doing better for the elemental if you control the lower passions, and take a firm stand of your own. It is true you do not develop a very low part of it; but you may drop the lower and evolve the higher. An animal can supply the lower kinds of vibrations even better than you can yourself, whereas none but man can evolve the higher type of essence.

After the death of the physical body the ordinary man, who has never heard all this, finds himself when he wakes up on the other side in a totally unexpected condition of affairs, and is generally more or less disturbed thereby. Finally, he accepts these conditions which he does not understand, thinking them necessary and inevitable. Some no doubt are, but some are not, and with knowledge the latter could be transcended.

The elemental is afraid, because it knows that the death of the physical body means that the term of its separated life is limited; it knows that the man's astral death will more or less quickly follow, and with it the loss to it of vivid and intense sensations.

Consequently it adopts the best plan it can think of for the preservation of the man's astral body. It evidently knows enough of astral physics to realise that the coarsest matter can hold together longest, and best stand friction. So it arranges the matter in rings, the coarsest on the outside. And in so doing it is right, from its point of view. During physical life the astral body is like swirling, boiling water, but after death it arranges the matter in a series of graduated sheaths, so that full circulation is impossible.

Now there are no sense organs in the astral body. There are in it organs corresponding to the physical sense-organs, but you do not see, hear and smell with them. You hear and see all over the surface of the body. Each sub-plane has its own matter; and it is by means of the matter of that sub-plane in your body that you can respond to its vibrations. Whatever matter is on the outside (or surface) of your body responds to these vibrations, and you see or hear by it alone. Consequently, what has happened is this: the elemental has, by this arrangement of the matter of your body, shut you up, as it were, in a box of astral matter, which enables you to see

and hear things of the lowest and coarsest plane only. If you object to being shut up in this way, it endeavours to make you believe that unless you do thus firmly root yourself into the lower matter you will float off, and lose yourself in a nebulous vagueness.

But if, on the other hand, you were to set your will to oppose it, then at once there would be a difference. The particles of the astral body would be kept all intermingled, as in life; and you would, in consequence, be free of all the sub-planes.

The final struggle with it takes place at the conclusion of the astral life, for then the ego endeavours to draw back into himself all that he put down into incarnation at the beginning of the life which has just closed—to recover as it were the principal which he has invested, plus the interest of the experience which has been gained and the qualities which have been developed during that life. But when he attempts to do this he is met with determined opposition from this desire-elemental, which he himself has created and fed.

Though it can hardly be described as intelligent, it has a strong instinct of

self-preservation, which leads it to resist with all the force at its command the extinction which threatens it. In the case of all ordinary mortals it attains a certain measure of success in its efforts, for much of the mental faculty has during life been governed by the lower desires and prostituted to their service, or in other words the lower mind has been so seriously entangled by desire that it is impossible for it to be entirely freed. The result of the struggle is therefore that some portion of the mental matter and even of causal matter is retained in the astral body after the ego has completely broken away from it. When a man has during life completely conquered his lower desires and succeeded in absolutely freeing the lower mind from desire, there is practically no struggle, and the ego reclaims in full both principal and interest; but there is unfortunately an opposite extreme when he is able to reclaim neither.

So our business, both during life and after death, is to control this desire-elemental, and not let *it* control us. Realise that you are a god in the making. All the power and force of the universe are on your side.

The result is certain. Range yourself on the side of the Law, and all will be simplified.

Absolute control of passions is eminently desirable, but is obtained by few. You have to keep your temper on the astral plane. You see many dreadful things, and if you have not all feelings thoroughly under control you may easily do something for which you will be sorry. Down here people often commit casual brutality and think nothing of it; a callous schoolmaster, for example, beats a child without realising his wickedness; but on the astral plane the heinousness of such a crime is at once obvious, and even the awful horrors of the karma which it entails may often be seen. On the astral you see the full effects of even an unkind word. Tremendous and violent passions may often attract low kinds of beings, who enter into the thought-forms and enjoy the vibrations. Such animated thought-forms may last for years, and even produce poltergeist phenomena.

LOST SOULS

It is an unspeakable relief to be set free by the common-sense of Theosophical teaching from the awful nightmare of the doctrine of eternal damnation which is still held by the more ignorant among the Christians, who do not understand the real meaning of certain phrases attributed in their gospels to their Founder. But some of our students, filled with glad enthusiasm by the glorious discovery that every unit must finally attain perfection, find their joy somewhat damped by gruesome hints that, after all, there are conditions under which a soul may be lost, and they begin to wonder whether the reign of divine law is really universal, or whether there is not some method by which man can contrive to escape from the dominion of the Logos and destroy himself. Let such doubters take comfort; the Will of the Logos is infinitely stronger than any human will, and not even the utmost exertion of perverse ingenuity can possibly prevail against Him.

It is true that He allows man to use his free-will, but only within certain well-

defined limits; if the man uses that will well, those limits are quickly widened, and more and more power over his own destiny is given to him; but if he uses that will for evil, he thereby increases his limitations, so that while his power for good is practically unbounded, because it has in it the potentiality of infinite growth, his power for evil is rigidly restricted. And this not because of any inequality is the incidence of the law, but because in the one case he exerts his will in the same direction as that of the Logos, and so is swimming with the evolutionary tide, while in the other he is struggling against it.

The term 'lost soul' is not well chosen, for it is almost certain to be misunderstood, and taken to imply much more than it really means. In every-day parlance, the word 'soul' is used with exasperating vagueness, but on the whole it is generally supposed to denote the subtler and more permanent part of man, so that to the man in the street to lose one's soul means to lose oneself, to be lost altogether. That is precisely what can never happen; therefore the expression is misleading, and a clear statement of the facts which it some-

what inaccurately labels may be of use to students. Of such facts there seem to be three classes; let us consider them one by one.

1. Those who will drop out of this evolution in the middle of the fifth round. This dropping out is precisely the æonian (*not* eternal) condemnation of which the Christ spoke as a very real danger for some of His unawakened hearers—the condemnation meaning merely the decision that they are incapable as yet of the higher progress, but not implying blame except in cases where opportunities have been neglected. Theosophy teaches us that men are all brothers, but not that they are all equal. There are immense differences between them; they have entered the human evolution at various periods, so that some are much older souls than others, and they stand at very different levels on the ladder of development. The older souls naturally learn much more rapidly than the younger, and so the distance between them steadily increases, and eventually a point is reached where the conditions necessary for the one type are entirely unsuitable for the other.

We may obtain a useful working analogy by thinking of the children in a class at

school. The teacher of the class has a year's work before him, to prepare his boys for a certain examination. He parcels out the work—so much for the first month, so much for the second, and so on, beginning of course with what is easiest and leading gradually up to what is more difficult. But the boys are of various ages and capacities; some learn rapidly and are in advance of the average, while some lag behind. New boys, too, are constantly coming into his class, some of them barely up to its level. When half the year has run its course, he resolutely closes the list for admissions, and declines to receive any more new boys.

That took place for us at the middle point of this fourth round, after which the door was shut for passage from the animal kingdom into the human, save for a few exceptional cases, which belong, as it were, to the future; just as you have a few men attaining adeptship, who are not belated remnants of the moon's adepts, but people in advance of the rest of humanity. In the same way there are a few animals at the stage of individualisation, which the generality are expected to reach at the end

of the seventh round. On the next planet an arrangement will be made by which these exceptions will have the opportunity of taking primitive human bodies.

A little later the teacher can already clearly foresee that some of his boys will certainly pass the examination, that the chance of others is doubtful, and that there are yet others who are sure to fail. It would be quite reasonable if he should say to these last:

“ We have now reached a stage when the further work of this class is useless for you. You cannot possibly by any effort attain the necessary standard in time for the examination; the more advanced teaching which must now be given to the others would be entirely unsuited for you, and as you could not understand it you would be not only wasting your own time but would be a hindrance to the rest of the class. It will therefore be better for you at once to transfer yourselves to the next class below this, perfect yourselves there in the preliminary lessons which you have not yet thoroughly learned, and come back to this level with next year's class, when you will be sure to pass with credit.”

That is exactly what will be done in the middle of the fifth round. Those who cannot by any effort reach the prescribed goal in the time which remains will be put back into a lower class, and if the classroom doors are not yet open they will wait in peace and happiness until the appointed time. They may be described as lost *to us*, lost to this particular little wave of evolution to which we belong; they are no longer "men of our year" as we say at College. But they will very certainly be "men of the next year"—even leading men in it, because of the work that they have already done and the experience that they have already had.

Most of these people fail because they are too young for the class, although they were too old to be put in the first place into the class below. They have had the advantage of going through the first half of the year's work, and they will therefore take it up again next time readily and easily, and will be able to help their more backward fellow-pupils who have not had their advantages. For those who are too young for the work there is no blame in failure.

But there is another large class who might succeed by determined effort, but fail for want of that effort. These exactly correspond to the boy who drops behind his class not because he is too young, but because he is too lazy to do his work. His fate is the same as that of the others, but it is obvious that while they were blameless because they did their best, he is blameworthy precisely because he did *not* do his; so he will carry with him a legacy of evil karma from which they are free. It is to men of that class that the Christ's exhortations were addressed—men who had the opportunity and ability to succeed, but were not making the necessary effort.

It is of these that Madame Blavatsky speaks in such vigorous terms as “useless drones who refuse to become co-workers with Nature, and who perish by millions during the manvantaric life-cycle.” (*Secret Doctrine*, iii, 526.) But note that this ‘perishing’ is merely from this ‘manvantaric life-cycle,’ and that it means for them delay only, and not total extinction. Delay is the worst that can happen to people in the ordinary course of evolution. Such a delay is

undoubtedly most serious, but, bad though it be, it is the best that can be done under the circumstances. If either through youth, or through laziness and perversity, these people have failed, it is clear that they need more training, and this training they must have. Obviously that is best for them, even though it means many lives—lives, many of which may be dreary, and may even contain much suffering. Still, they must go through to the end, because that is the only way by which they can attain the level which the more advanced races have already reached through similar long-continued evolution.

It was with the object of saving as many people as possible from that additional suffering that the Christ said to His disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." For baptism and its corresponding rites in other religions are the sign of the dedication of the life to the service of the Brotherhood, and the man who is able to grasp the truth, and consequently sets his face in the right direction, will certainly be among the

‘saved’ or ‘safe,’ who escape the condemnation in the fifth round; while those who do not take the trouble to see the truth and follow it will assuredly fall under that condemnation. But remember always that the ‘damnation’ means only rejection from this ‘æon’ or chain of worlds, a throwing back into the next of the successive life-waves. ‘Lost souls,’ if you will; lost to us, perhaps, but not to the Logos; so they would be better described as temporarily laid aside. Of course it must not be supposed that the ‘belief’ which saves them is the knowledge of Theosophy; it does not matter in the least what their religion is, so long as they are aiming at the spiritual life, so long as they have definitely ranged themselves on the side of good as against evil, and are working unselfishly onward and upward.

2. Cases in which the personality has been so much emphasised that the ego is almost shut out from it. Of these there are two varieties—those who live only in their passions, and those who live only in their minds; and as both types are by no means uncommon it is worth while to try to understand exactly what happens to them.

We often speak of the ego as putting himself down into the matter of the lower planes, yet many students fail to realise that this is not a mere figure of speech, but has a very definite and very material side to it. The ego dwells in a causal body, and when he takes upon himself in addition a mental and an astral body, the operation involves the actual entangling of a portion of the matter of his causal body with matter of those lower astral and mental types. We may regard this 'putting down' as a kind of investment made by the ego. As in all investments, so in this; he hopes to get back more than he puts out, but there is a risk of disappointment—a possibility that he may lose something of what he invests, or under very exceptional circumstances there may even be a total loss which leaves him, not indeed absolutely bankrupt, but without available capital.

Let us consider the elaboration of this analogy. The ego possesses in his causal body matter of three levels—the first, second and third sub-planes of the mental; but for the enormous majority of mankind there is as yet no activity beyond the lowest of

these three types, and even that is usually very partial. It is therefore only some of this lowest type of causal matter that can be put down to lower levels, and only a small fraction even of that part can be entangled with mental and astral matter.

The ego's control over what is put down is very weak and imperfect, because he is still half asleep. But as his physical body grows up his astral and mental bodies are also developed, and the causal matter entangled with them is awakened by the vigorous vibrations which reach it through them. This fraction of a fraction which is fully entangled gives life and vigour and a sense of individuality to these vehicles, and they in turn react strongly upon it and arouse it to a keen realisation of life. This keen realisation of life is exactly what it needs, the very object for which it is put down; and it is the longing for this keen realisation when it has it not which is spoken of as *trishnā* (the thirst for manifested life, the desire to feel oneself really vividly alive), the force which draws the ego down again into reincarnation.

But just because this small fraction has had these experiences, and is therefore so

much more awake than the rest of the ego, it may often be so far intensified as to think itself the whole, and forget for the time its relation to "its Father which is in heaven." It may temporarily identify itself with the matter through which it should be working, and may resist the influence of that other portion which has been put down, but is not entangled—that which forms the link with the great mass of the ego on his own plane.

In order to understand this matter fully we must think of that portion of the ego which is awakened on the third sub-plane of the mental (remembering always how small a fraction even that is of the whole) as itself divided into three parts: (*a*) that which remains on its own plane; (*b*) that which is put down, but remains unentangled in lower matter; and (*c*) that which is thoroughly entangled with lower matter and receives vibrations from it. These are arranged in a descending scale, for just as (*a*) is a very small part of the real ego, so (*b*) is but a small part of (*a*), and (*c*) in turn a small part of (*b*). The second acts as a link between the first and third; we may symbolise (*a*) as the body, (*b*) as the arm stretched out, and (*c*) as the hand which grasps, or

perhaps rather the tips of the fingers which are dipped into matter.

We have here a very delicately balanced arrangement, which may be affected in various ways. The intention is that the hand (*c*) should grasp firmly and guide the matter with which it is entangled, being fully directed all the time by the body (*a*) through the arm (*b*). Under favourable circumstances additional strength, and even additional matter, may be poured from (*a*) through (*b*) into (*c*), so that the control may become more and more perfect. (*c*) may grow in size as well as in strength, and the more it does so the better, so long as the communication through (*b*) is kept open freely and (*a*) retains control. For the very entanglement of the causal matter which constitutes (*c*) awakens it to a keen activity and an accuracy of response to fine shades of vibration which it could gain in no other way, and this, when transmitted through (*b*) to (*a*), means the development of the ego himself.

Unfortunately the course of events does not always follow the ideal plan of working above indicated. When the control of (*a*) is feeble, it sometimes happens that (*c*) becomes

so thoroughly immeshed in lower matter that (as I have said) it actually identifies itself with it, forgets for the time its high estate, and thinks of itself as the whole ego. If the matter be of the lower mental plane, we shall then have down here on the physical plane a man who is wholly materialistic. He may be keenly intellectual perhaps, but not spiritual; he may very likely be intolerant of spirituality and quite unable to comprehend or appreciate it. He may probably call himself practical, matter-of-fact, unsentimental, while in reality he is hard as the nether millstone, and because of that hardness his life is a failure, and he is making no progress.

If the matter in which he is so fatally entangled be astral, he will be (on the physical plane) one who thinks only of his own gratification, who is absolutely ruthless when in pursuit of some object which he strongly desires, a man utterly unprincipled and of brutal selfishness. Such a man lives in his passions, just as the man immeshed in mental matter lives in his mind. Cases such as these have been spoken of in our literature as 'lost souls,' though not irretrievably lost. Madame Blavatsky says of them :

“There is, however, still hope for a person who has lost his Higher Soul through his vices, while he is yet in the body. He may still be redeemed and made to turn on his material nature. For either an intense feeling of repentance, or one single earnest appeal to the Ego that has fled, or best of all, an active effort to amend one’s ways, may bring the Higher Ego back again. The thread of connection is not altogether broken.” (*Secret Doctrine*, iii. 527).

These are cases in which (c) has asserted itself against (b), and pressed it back towards (a); the arm has become attenuated and almost paralysed, its strength and substance being withdrawn into the body, while the hand has set up for itself, and makes on its own account jerky and spasmodic movements which are not controlled by the brain. If the separation could become perfect it would correspond to an amputation at the wrist, but this very rarely takes place during physical existence, though only so much of communication remains as is necessary to keep the personality alive.

As Madame Blavatsky says, such a case is not entirely hopeless, for even at the last moment fresh life may be poured through

that paralysed arm if a sufficiently strong effort be made, and thus the ego may be enabled to recover some proportion of (*c*), as he has already recovered most of (*b*). Nevertheless, such a life has been wasted, for even if the man just contrives to escape serious loss, at any rate nothing has been gained, and much time has been frittered away.

It may well be thought incredible that such men as I have described could in any case escape serious loss; but, fortunately for our possibilities of progress, the laws under which we live are such that to achieve a really serious loss is no easy matter. The reason for that may perhaps be made clear by the following considerations.

All the activities that we call evil, whether they are working as selfish thoughts on the mental plane or as selfish emotions on the astral plane, invariably show themselves as vibrations of the coarser matter of those planes, belonging to their lower levels. On the other hand, every good and unselfish thought or emotion sets in vibration some of the higher types of matter on its plane; and because that finer matter is far more easily moved, any given amount

of force spent in good thought or feeling produces perhaps a hundred times as much result as precisely the same amount of force sent out into the coarser matter. If this were not so, it is obvious that the ordinary man could never make any progress at all.

We shall probably do the quite undeveloped man of the world no injustice if we assume that ninety per cent of his thought and feeling is self-centred, even if not actually selfish; if ten per cent of it is spiritual and unselfish, he must already be rising somewhat above the average. Clearly if these proportions produced corresponding results, the vast majority of humanity would take nine steps backwards for every one forwards, and we should have a retrogression so rapid that a few incarnations would deposit us in the animal kingdom out of which we evolved. Happily for us the effect of ten per cent of force directed to good ends enormously outweighs that of ninety per cent devoted to selfish purposes, and so on the whole such a man makes an appreciable advance from life to life. A man who has even one per cent of good to show makes a slight advance, so it will be readily understood that a man whose account balances exactly, so

that there is neither advance nor retrogression, must have been living a distinctly evil life; while to obtain an actual descent in evolution a person must be an unusually consistent villain.

Thanks to this beneficent law the world is steadily but slowly evolving, even though we see round us all the while so much that is undesirable; and even such men as I have described may not after all fall very far. What they have lost is rather time and opportunity than actual position in evolution; but to lose time and opportunity means always additional suffering.

To see what they have lost and what they have failed to do, let us revert for a moment to the analogy of investment. The ego expects to recover that which he puts out to interest in lower matter—the block that we have called (*c*)—and he expects it to be improved both in quality and quantity. Its quality is better because it has become much more awake, and capable of instant and accurate response to a far more varied gamut of vibrations than before—a capacity which (*c*) when reabsorbed necessarily communicates to (*a*), though of course the store of energy which made

such a powerful wave in (c) creates only a ripple when distributed throughout the the substance of (a). (It should be noted here that although the vehicles, containing as they do the grosser as well as the finer types of the matter of their respective planes, can respond to and express evil thoughts and emotions, and although their excitement under such vibrations can produce perturbation in the entangled causal matter (c), it is quite impossible for that matter (c) to reproduce those vibrations or to communicate them to (a) or (b), simply because matter of the three higher mental levels can no more vibrate at the rate of the lowest plane than the string of a violin tuned to a certain pitch can be made to produce a note lower than that pitch.)

(c) should also be increased in quantity, because the causal body, like all other vehicles, is constantly changing its matter, and when special exercise is given to a certain part of it, that part grows in size and becomes stronger, precisely as a physical muscle does when it is used. Every earth-life is an opportunity carefully calculated for such development in quality and quantity

as is most needed by the ego ; a failure to use that opportunity means the trouble and delay of another similar incarnation, its sufferings probably aggravated by the additional bad karma incurred.

Against the increment which the ego has a right to expect from each incarnation we must offset a certain amount of loss which in the earlier stages is scarcely avoidable. In order to be effective the entanglement with lower matter must be very intimate, and it is found that when that is so, it is scarcely ever possible to recover every particle, especially from the connection with the astral vehicle. When the time comes for separation from that, it is almost always a shade and not a mere shell that is left behind on the astral plane ; and that very distinction means that something of the causal material is lost. Except in the case of an unusually bad life, however, this amount should be much smaller than that gained by growth, and so there should be on the whole a profit on the transaction. With such men as I have described—men living entirely in their passions or their minds—there would be no gain either in quality or quantity, since the vibrations

would not be such as could be stored in the causal body; and on the other hand, as the entanglement had been so strong, there would certainly be considerable loss when the separation took place.

We must not allow the analogy of the arm and hand to mislead us into thinking of (*b*) and (*c*) as permanent appanages of the ego. During a life-period they may be considered as separate, but at the end of each life-period they withdraw into (*a*), and the result of their experience is distributed, as it were, through the whole of its substance; so that when the time comes for that ego to put part of himself out into incarnation once more, he does not stretch out again the old (*b*) and (*c*), for they have been absorbed in him and become part of him, just as a cupful of water emptied into a bucket becomes part of the water in the bucket and cannot be separated from it.

Any colouring matter which was present in the cup is distributed (though in paler tint) through the whole bucketful of water; and that colouring matter may be taken as symbolising the qualities developed by experience. Just as it would be impossible to

take out again from the bucket exactly the same cupful of water, so the ego cannot again put out the same (*b*) and (*c*). The plan is one to which he was accustomed before he became a separate ego at all, for it is identical with that pursued by the group-soul, except that the latter puts down many tentacles simultaneously, while the ego puts forth only one at a time. Therefore the personality in each new incarnation is a different one, though the ego behind it remains the same.

3. Cases in which the personality captures the part of the ego which is put down, and actually breaks away. These are happily excessively rare, but they have happened, and they represent the most appalling catastrophe that can occur to the ego concerned. This time (*c*), instead of repelling (*b*) and driving it gradually back into (*a*), by degrees absorbs (*b*) and detaches it from (*a*). This can only be accomplished by determined persistence in deliberate evil—black magic, in short. Reverting to our former analogies, this is equivalent to amputation at the shoulder, or to the loss by the ego of nearly all his available capital. Fortunately for him he cannot lose everything, because (*b*) and (*c*) together are only a small proportion of (*a*),

and behind (*a*) is the great undeveloped portion of the ego on the first and second mental sub-planes. Mercifully a man, however incredibly foolish or wicked, cannot completely wreck himself, for he cannot bring that higher part of the causal body into activity until he has reached a level at which such evil is unthinkable.

Now that the central point of our immersion in matter is passed, the whole force of the universe is pressing upwards towards unity, and the man who is willing to make all his life an intelligent co-operation with nature gains as part of his reward an ever-increasing perception of the reality of this unity. But on the other hand it is obvious that men may set themselves in opposition to nature and, instead of working unselfishly for the good of all, may debase every faculty they possess for purely selfish ends; and of them also, as of the others, the old saying is true, "Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." They spend their lives in striving for separateness, and for a long time they attain it, and it is said that that sensation of being utterly alone in space is the most awful fate that can ever befall the sons of men.

This extraordinary development of selfishness

is the characteristic of the black magician, and it is among their ranks only that men can be found who are in danger of this terrible fate. Many and loathsome are their varieties, but they may all be classed in one or other of two great divisions. They both use such occult arts as they possess for purely selfish purposes, but these purposes differ. .

In the commoner and less formidable type the object pursued is the gratification of sensual desire of some sort, and naturally the result of a life devoted to nothing but that is to centre the man's energy in the desire-body; so that if the man who works on these lines has succeeded in killing out from himself every unselfish or affectionate feeling, every spark of higher impulse, naturally nothing is left but a remorseless, ruthless monster of lust, who finds himself after death neither able nor desirous to rise above the lowest subdivision of the astral plane. The whole of such mind as he has is absolutely in the grip of desire, and when the struggle takes place the ego can recover none of it, and finds himself seriously weakened in consequence.

By his carelessness in permitting this he has for the time cut himself off from the current of evolution, from the mighty wave of the life of the Logos, and so, until he can return to incarnation, he stands (what appears to him to be) outside that life in the condition of avichī, the waveless. Even when he does return to incarnation it cannot be among those whom he has known before, for he has not enough available capital left to provide ensoulment for a mind and body at his previous level. He must now be content to occupy vehicles of a far less evolved type, belonging to some earlier race; so that he has thrown himself far back in evolution and must climb over again many rungs of the ladder.

He will probably be born as a savage, but will most likely be a chief among them, as he will still have some intellect. It has been said that he may even throw himself so far back that he may be unable to find upon the world in its present condition any type of human body low enough for the manifestation which he now requires, so that he may even be incapacitated from taking any further part in this scheme of evolution, and may therefore

have to wait in a kind of condition of suspended animation for the commencement of another.

Meanwhile what of the amputated personality? It is no longer a permanent evolving entity, but it remains full of vigorous and wholly evil life, entirely without remorse or responsibility. As the fate before it is disintegration amidst the unpleasant surroundings of what is called the 'eighth sphere,' it naturally tries to maintain some sort of existence on the physical plane as long as possible. Vampirism of some kind is its sole means of prolonging its baneful existence, and when that fails it has been known to seize upon any available body, driving out the lawful owner. The body chosen might very probably be that of a child, both because it might be expected to last longer and because an ego which had not yet really taken hold could be more easily dispossessed. In spite of its frenzied efforts its power seems soon to fail, and I believe there is no instance on record of its successfully stealing a second body after its first theft is worn out. The creature is a demon of the most terrible type—a monster for which there is no permanent place in the

scheme of evolution to which we belong.

Its natural tendency therefore is to drift *out* of this evolution, and to be drawn by the irresistible force of law into that astral cesspool which in earlier Theosophical writings was called the eighth sphere, because what passes into it stands outside the ring of seven worlds, and cannot return into their evolution. There, surrounded by loathsome relics of all the concentrated vileness of the ages that are past, burning ever with desire, yet without possibility of satisfaction, this monstrosity slowly decays, its mental and causal matter being thus at last set free—never indeed to rejoin the ego from which it has torn itself, but to be distributed among the other matter of the plane to enter gradually into fresh combinations, and so be put to better uses. It is consoling to know that such entities are so rare as to be practically unknown, and that they have the power to seize only those who have in their nature pronounced defects of kindred type.

But there is another type of the black magician, in outward appearance more respectable, yet really even more dangerous, because more powerful. This is the man

who instead of giving himself up altogether to sensuality of one kind or another, sets before himself the goal of a more refined but not less unscrupulous selfishness. His object is the acquisition of an occult power higher and wider indeed, but to be used always for his own gratification and advancement, to further his own ambition or satisfy his own revenge.

In order to gain this he adopts the most rigid asceticism as regards mere fleshly desires, and starves out the grosser particles of his astral body as perseveringly as does the pupil of the Great White Brotherhood. But though it is only a less material kind of desire with which he will allow his mind to become entangled, the centre of his energy is none the less entirely in his personality, and when at the end of the astral life the time of the separation comes, the ego is able to recover no whit of his investment. For the man therefore the result is much the same as in the former case, except that he will remain in touch with the personality much longer, and will to some extent share its experiences so far as it is possible for an ego to share them.

The fate of that personality, however, is

very different. The comparatively tenuous astral integument is not strong enough to hold it for any length of time on the astral plane, and yet it has entirely lost touch with the heaven-world which should have been its habitat. For the whole effort of the man's life has been to kill out such thoughts as naturally find their result at that level. His one endeavour has been to oppose natural evolution, to separate himself from the great whole and to war against it; and as far as the personality goes he has succeeded. It is cut off from the light and life of the solar system; all that is left to it is the sense of absolute isolation, of being alone in the universe.

We see therefore that in this rarer case the lost personality practically shares the fate of the ego from which it is in process of detaching itself. But in the case of the ego such an experience is only temporary, although it may last for what we should call a very long time, and the end of it for him will be reincarnation and a fresh opportunity. For the personality however the end of it is disintegration—the invariable end of that which has cut itself off from its source: but through what stages

of horror the lost personality passes before that is reached, who shall say? Yet be it remembered that neither of these states is eternal—that neither of them can in any case be reached except by deliberate life-long persistence in evil.

I have heard from our President of yet another even more remote possibility, of which I have never myself seen an instance. It is stated that, just as (*c*) may absorb (*b*) and revolt against (*a*), set up on its own account and break away, it is (or at any rate has been in the past) just within the limits of practicability that the deadly disease of separateness and selfishness may infect (*a*) also, that it too may be absorbed into the monstrous growth of evil, and may be torn away from the undeveloped portion of the ego, so that the causal body itself may be hardened and carried away, instead of only the personality.

If this be so, it constitutes yet a fourth group, and would correspond not to an amputation, but to an entire destruction of the body. Such an ego could not reincarnate in the human race; ego though it be, it would fall into the depths of animal life, and would need at least a

whole chain-period to regain the status which it had lost. But this, though theoretically possible, is practically scarcely conceivable. Yet it will be noted that even *then* the undeveloped part of the ego remains as the vehicle of the monad.

We learn then that millions of backward egos, unable as yet to bear the strain of the higher evolution, will fall out in the middle of the fifth round and come along on the crest of the following wave; that those who live selfishly, whether in the intellect or the passions, do so at their own proper peril, and at the serious risk of much sorrow and loss; that those who are so foolish as to dabble in black magic may bring upon themselves horrors before which imagination shrinks appalled; but that the term 'lost soul' is, after all, a misnomer, since every man is a spark of the divine fire, and therefore can never under any circumstances be lost or extinguished. The will of the Logos is man's evolution. In our blindness we may for a time resist Him, but to Him time is naught, and if we cannot see to-day He waits patiently till to-morrow, but always in the end His will is done.

THE FOCUS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The consciousness in man can only be focussed in one vehicle at a time, though he may be simultaneously conscious through the others in a vaguer way. If you will hold up a finger in front of your face you will find that you can so focus your eyes as to see the finger perfectly. At the same time you will see the wall and furniture behind the finger, but not perfectly, because they are out of focus. In a moment you can change the focus of your eyes, so that you will see the wall and the furniture perfectly ; in that case you will still see the finger, but will see it only dimly, because it in turn is now out of focus.

Precisely in the same way if a man who has developed astral and mental consciousness focusses himself in the physical brain as in ordinary life, he will see perfectly the physical bodies of his friends, and will at the same time see their astral and mental bodies, but only somewhat dimly. In far less than a moment he can change that focus so that he will see the astral quite fully and perfectly. In that case he will still see the mental and physical bodies,

but not in full detail. The same thing is true of the mental sight and of the sight of higher planes.

You ask how it is possible for an entity functioning on the astral plane to be aware of a physical accident or to hear a physical cry. It would not be the physical cry that he would hear; physical sounds assuredly produce an effect upon the astral plane, though I do not think that we should be quite correct in calling that result sound. Any cry which had in it strong feeling or emotion would produce a strong effect upon the astral plane, and would convey exactly the same idea there as here. In the case of an accident the rush of emotion caused by the pain or the fright would flame out like a great light, and could not fail to attract the attention of a seer if he were anywhere near. A case in which this very thing occurred is related in *Invisible Helpers*—a case in which a boy fell over a cliff; and was supported and comforted by Cyril until physical help could be brought.

FORCE-CENTRES

In each of our vehicles there are certain force-centres which in Sanskrit are called *chakrams*—a word which signifies a wheel or revolving disc. These are points of connection at which force flows from one vehicle to another. They may easily be seen in the etheric double, where they show themselves as saucer-like depressions or vortices in its surface. They are often spoken of as corresponding to certain physical organs; but it must be remembered that the etheric force-centre is not in the interior of the body, but on the surface of the etheric double, which projects a quarter of an inch beyond the outline of the denser matter.

The centres which are usually employed in occult development are seven, and they are situated in the following parts of the body: (1) the base of the spine; (2) the navel; (3) the spleen; (4) the heart; (5) the throat; (6) the space between the eyebrows; and (7) the top of the head. There are other force-centres in the body besides these, but they are not employed by students of the white magic. It may be remembered that Madame Blavatsky speaks

of three others which she calls the lower centres: there are schools which use these, but the dangers connected with them are so serious that we should consider their awakening as the greatest of misfortunes.

These seven are often described as corresponding to the seven colours and to the notes of the musical scale; and in the Indian books certain letters of the alphabet and certain forms of vitality are mentioned as attached to each of them. They are also poetically described as resembling flowers, and to each of them a certain number of petals is assigned.

It must be remembered that they are vortices of etheric matter, and that they are all in rapid rotation. Into each of these open mouths, at right angles to the plane of the whirling disc or saucer, rushes a force from the astral world (which we will call the primary force)—one of the forces of the Logos. That force is seven-fold in its nature, and all its forms operate in all the centres, though in each of them one of the forms is always greatly predominant.

This inrush of force brings the divine life into the physical body, and without it that body could not exist. These centres

through which the force can enter are therefore actually necessary to the existence of the vehicle, and so are in operation in every one, but they may be whirling with very different degrees of activity. Their particles may be in comparatively sluggish motion, just forming the necessary vortex for the force and no more, or they may be glowing and pulsating with living light so that an enormously greater amount of force passes through them, with the result that various additional faculties and possibilities are opened to the ego as he functions on that plane.

Now those forces which rush into the centre from without set up at right angles to themselves (that is to say, in the surface of the etheric double) secondary forces in undulatory circular motion, just as a bar-magnet thrust into an induction coil produces a current of electricity which flows round the coil at right angles to the axis or direction of the magnet. The primary force itself having entered the vortex, radiates from it again at right angles, but in straight lines, as though the centre of the vortex were the hub of a wheel, and the radiations of the primary force its

spokes. The number of these 'spokes' differs in the different force-centres, and determines the number of 'petals' which each of them exhibits.

Each of these secondary forces, which sweep round the saucer-like depression, has its own characteristic wave-length, just as has light of a certain colour; but instead of moving in a straight line, as light does, it moves along in certain relatively large undulations of various sizes, each of which is some multiple of the smaller wave-lengths within it, though the exact proportions have not as yet been calculated. The number of undulations is determined by the number of spokes in the wheel, and the secondary force weaves itself under and over the radiating currents of the primary just as basket-work might be woven round the spokes of a carriage-wheel. The wave-lengths are infinitesimal, and probably some thousands of them are included within one of the undulations. As the forces rush round in the vortex, these undulations of different sizes, crossing one another in this basket-work pattern, produce an appearance which is not inaptly described in the Hindu books as resemb-

ling the petals of a flower; or it is still more like certain saucers or shallow vases of wavy iridescent glass which I have seen in Venice. All of these undulations or petals have that shimmering iridescent effect, like mother-of-pearl, yet each of them has usually its own predominant colour.

In the ordinary man, in whom these centres are just active enough to be channels for sufficient force to keep his body alive, these colours glow with a comparatively dull light; but in those in whom the centres have been aroused and are in full activity they are of blinding brilliancy, and the centres themselves, which have gradually grown from a diameter of about two inches to the size of an ordinary saucer, are blazing and coruscating like miniature suns.

The first centre, at the base of the spine, has a primary force which radiates out in four spokes, and therefore arranges its undulations so as to give the effect of its being divided into quadrants, with hollows between them. This makes it seem as though marked with the sign of the cross, and for that reason the cross is often used to symbolise this centre, and sometimes a flaming cross is taken to indi-

cate the serpent-fire which resides in it. When aroused into full activity this centre is fiery orange-red in colour, corresponding closely with the type of vitality which is sent down to it from the splenic centre. Indeed, it will be noticed that in the case of every one of these centres a similar correspondence with the colour of its vitality may be seen.

The second centre, at the navel or solar plexus, receives a primary force with ten radiations, so it vibrates in such a manner as to divide itself into ten undulations or petals. It is very closely associated with feelings and emotions of various kinds. Its predominant colour is a curious blending of various shades of red, though there is also a great deal of green in it.

The third centre, at the spleen, is devoted to the specialisation, subdivision and dispersion of the vitality which comes to us from the sun. That vitality is poured out again from it in six horizontal streams, the seventh variety being drawn into the hub of the wheel. This centre therefore has six petals or undulations, and is specially radiant, glowing and sun-like.

The fourth centre, at the heart, is also

of a glowing golden colour, and each of its quadrants is divided into three parts, which gives it twelve undulations, because its primary force makes for it twelve spokes.

The fifth centre, at the throat, has sixteen spokes, and therefore sixteen apparent divisions. There is a good deal of blue in it, but its general effect is silvery and gleaming, with a kind of suggestion as of moonlight upon rippling water.

The sixth centre, between the eyebrows, has the appearance of being divided into halves, the one predominantly rose-coloured, though with a great deal of yellow about it, and the other predominantly a kind of purplish-blue, again closely agreeing with the colours of the special types of vitality that vivify it. Perhaps it is for this reason that this centre is mentioned in Indian books as having only two petals, though if we are to count undulations of the same character as those of the previous centres we shall find that each half is subdivided into forty-eight of these, making ninety-six in all, because its primary force has that number of radiations.

The seventh, the centre at the top of the head, is when stirred into full activity

perhaps the most resplendent of all, full of indescribable chromatic effects and vibrating with almost inconceivable rapidity. It is described in Indian books as thousand-petalled, and really this is not very far from the truth, the number of the radiations of its primary force in the outer circle being nine hundred and sixty. In addition to this it has a feature which is possessed by none of the other centres—a sort of subsidiary whirlpool of gleaming white flushed with gold in its heart—a minor activity which has twelve undulations of its own.

I have heard it suggested that each of the different petals of these force-centres represents a moral quality, and that the development of that quality brings the centre into activity. I have not yet met with any facts which confirm this, nor am I able to see exactly how it can be, because the appearance is produced by certain quite definite and easily recognisable forces, and the petals in any particular centre are either active or not active according as these forces have or have not been aroused, and their development seems to me to have no more connection with morality than has the development of the biceps.

I have certainly met with persons in whom some of the centres were in full activity, though the moral development was by no means exceptionally high, whereas in other persons of high spirituality and the noblest possible morality the centres were not yet vitalised at all, so that there does not seem to me to be any connection between the two developments.

Besides the keeping alive of the physical vehicle, these force-centres have another function, which comes into play only when they are awakened into full activity. Each of these etheric centres corresponds to an astral centre, though as the astral centre is a vortex in four dimensions it has an extension in a direction quite different from the etheric, and consequently is by no means always co-terminous with it, though some part is always coincident. The etheric vortex is always on the surface of the etheric body, but the astral centre is frequently quite in the interior of that vehicle.

The function of each of these etheric centres when fully aroused is to bring down into physical consciousness whatever may be the quality inherent in the astral centre which corresponds to it ; so, before catalogu-

ing the results to be obtained by arousing the etheric centres into activity, it may be well to consider what is done by each of the astral centres, although these latter are already in full activity in all cultured people of the later races. What effect, then, has the quickening of each of these astral centres produced in the astral body?

The first of these centres, that at the base of the spine, is the home of that mysterious force called the serpent-fire or, in *The Voice of the Silence*, the World's Mother. I will say more about this force later; for the moment let us consider its effects on the astral centres. This force exists on all planes, and by its activity the rest of the centres are aroused. We must think of the astral body as having been originally an almost inert mass, with nothing but the vaguest consciousness, with no definite power of doing anything, and no clear knowledge of the world which surrounded it. The first thing that happened, then, was the awakening of that force in the man at the astral level. When awakened it moved on to the second centre, corresponding to the navel, and vivified it, thereby awakening in the astral body the

power of feeling—a sensitiveness to all sorts of influences, though without as yet anything like the definite comprehension that comes from seeing or hearing.

Then it moved on to the third, that corresponding to the physical spleen, and through it vitalised the whole astral body, enabling the person to travel consciously, though with only a vague conception as yet of what he encountered on his journeys.

The fourth centre, when awakened, endowed the man with the power to comprehend and sympathise with the vibrations of other astral entities, so that he could instinctively understand their feelings.

The awakening of the fifth, that corresponding to the throat, gave him the power of hearing on the astral plane—that is to say, it caused the development of that sense which in the astral world produces on our consciousness the effect which on the physical plane we call hearing.

The development of the sixth, that corresponding to the centre between the eyebrows, in a similar manner produced astral sight—the power to perceive definitely the shape and nature of astral objects, instead of vaguely sensing their presence.

The arousing of the seventh, that corresponding to the top of the head, rounded off and completed for him the astral life, and endowed him with the perfection of its faculties.

With regard to this centre a certain difference seems to exist according to the type to which men belong. For many of us the astral vortices corresponding to the sixth and seventh of these centres both converge upon the pituitary body, and for those people the pituitary body is practically the only direct link between the physical and the higher planes. Another type of people, however, while still attaching the sixth centre to the pituitary body, bend or slant the seventh until its vortex coincides with the atrophied organ called the pineal gland, which is by people of that type vivified and made into a line of communication directly with the lower mental, without apparently passing through the intermediate astral plane in the ordinary way. It was for this type that Madame Blavatsky was writing when she laid such emphasis upon the awakening of that organ.

Thus these centres to some extent take the place of sense-organs for the astral body, and

yet without proper qualification that expression would be decidedly a misleading one, for it must never be forgotten that though, in order to make ourselves intelligible, we constantly have to speak of astral seeing or astral hearing, all that we really mean by those expressions is the faculty of responding to such vibrations as convey to the man's consciousness, when he is functioning in his astral body, information of the same character as that conveyed to him by his eyes and ears while he is in the physical body.

But in the entirely different astral conditions specialised organs are not necessary for the attainment of this result. There is matter in every part of the astral body which is capable of such response, and consequently the man functioning in that vehicle sees equally well the objects behind him, above him, and beneath him, without needing to turn his head. The centres, therefore, cannot be described as organs in the ordinary sense of the word, since it is not through them that the man sees or hears, as he does here through the eyes and ears. Yet it is upon their vivification that the power of exercising these astral

senses depends, each of them as it is developed giving to the whole astral body the power of response to a new set of vibrations.

As all the particles of the astral body are constantly flowing and swirling about like those of boiling water, all of them in turn pass through each of the centres or vortices, so that each centre in its turn evokes in all the particles of the body the power of receptivity to a certain set of vibrations, and so all the astral senses are equally active in all parts of the body. But even when these astral senses are fully awakened it by no means follows that the man will be able to bring through into his physical body any consciousness of their action.

While all this astral awakening was taking place, then, the man in his physical consciousness knew nothing whatever of it. The only way in which the dense body can be brought to share all these advantages is by repeating that process of awakening with the etheric centres. That is to be achieved precisely in the same way as it was done upon the astral plane—that is to say, by the arousing of the serpent-fire, which exists clothed in etheric matter on

the physical plane, and sleeps in the corresponding etheric centre, that at the base of the spine.

In this case the arousing is done by a determined and long-continued effort of the will, and to bring that first centre into full activity is precisely to awaken the serpent-fire. When once that is aroused, it is by its tremendous force that the other centres are vivified. Its effect on the other etheric centres is to bring into the physical consciousness the powers which were aroused by the development of their corresponding astral centres.

When the second of the etheric centres, that at the navel, comes into activity the man begins in the physical body to be conscious of all kinds of astral influences, vaguely feeling that some of them are friendly and others hostile, or that some places are pleasant and others unpleasant, without in the least knowing why.

When the third centre, that at the spleen, is awakened, the man is enabled to remember his vague astral journeys, though sometimes only very partially. The effect of a slight and accidental stimulation of this centre is often to produce half-remembrance

of a blissful sensation of flying through the air.

Stimulation of the fourth, that at the heart, makes the man instinctively aware of the joys and sorrows of others, and sometimes even causes him to reproduce in himself by sympathy their physical aches and pains.

The arousing of the fifth, that at the throat, enables him to hear voices, which sometimes make all kinds of suggestions to him. Also sometimes he hears music, or other less pleasant sounds. When it is fully working it makes the man clairaudient as far as the etheric and astral planes are concerned.

When the sixth, between the eye-brows, becomes vivified, the man begins to see things, to have various sorts of waking visions, sometimes of places, sometimes of people. In its earlier development, when it is only just beginning to be awakened, it often means nothing more than half-seeing landscapes and clouds of colour. The full arousing of this brings about clairvoyance.

The centre between the eye-brows is connected with sight in yet another way. It is through it that the power of magnifi-

cation of minute physical objects is exercised. A tiny flexible tube of etheric matter is projected from the centre of it, resembling a microscopic snake with an eye at the end of it. This is the special organ used in that form of clairvoyance, and the eye at the end of it can be expanded or contracted, the effect being to change the power of magnification according to the size of the object which is being examined. This is what is meant in ancient books when mention is made of the capacity to make oneself large or small at will. To examine an atom one develops an organ of vision commensurate in size with the atom. This little snake projecting from the centre of the forehead was symbolised upon the head-dress of the Pharaoh of Egypt, who as the chief priest of his country was supposed to possess this among many other occult powers.

When the seventh centre is awakened the man is able by passing through it to leave his body in full consciousness, and also to return to it without the usual break, so that his consciousness will be continuous through night and day. When the fire has been passed through all these centres in a

certain order (which varies for different types of people) the consciousness becomes continuous up to the entry into the heaven-world at the end of the life on the astral plane, no difference being made by either the temporary separation from the physical body during sleep or the permanent division at death.

Before this is done, however, the man may have many glimpses of the astral world, for specially strong vibrations may at any time galvanise one or other of the centres into temporary activity, without arousing the serpent-fire at all; or it may happen that the fire may be partially roused, and in this way also partial clairvoyance may be produced for the time. For this fire exists in seven layers or seven degrees of force, and it often happens that a man who exerts his will in the effort to arouse it may succeed in affecting one layer only, and so when he thinks that he has done the work he may find it ineffective, and may have to do it all over again many times, digging gradually deeper and deeper, until not only the surface is stirred but the very heart of the fire is in full activity.

THE SERPENT-FIRE

As we know it, this serpent-fire (called in Sanskrit kundalinī) is the manifestation on the physical plane of one of the great world-forces—one of the powers of the Logos. You know that what we call electricity is a manifestation of one of His forces, and that that force may take various forms, such as heat, light and motion. Another of His forces is vitality—what is sometimes called prāna, but this is not interchangeable with any of those other forms which we have just mentioned. We may say then that vitality and electricity are as it were the lower ends of two of His streams of force.

This serpent-fire may be taken as the lower end of another of His streams, the physical-plane manifestation of another of the manifold aspects of His power. Like vitality, it exists on all planes of which we know anything; but it is the expression of it in etheric matter with which we have to do. It is not convertible into either vitality or electricity, and does not seem to be affected in any way by either. I have seen as much as a million and a quarter

volts of electricity put into a human body, so that when the man held out his arm towards the wall huge flames rushed out from his fingers, yet he felt nothing unusual, nor was he in the least burnt unless he accidentally touched some external object; but even this enormous display of power had no effect whatever upon the serpent-fire.

In *The Voice of the Silence* this force is called 'the Fiery Power' and 'the World's Mother.' There is much reason for all these strange names, for it is in very truth like liquid fire as it rushes through the body, and the course through which it ought to move is a spiral one like the coils of a serpent. It is called the World's Mother because through it our various vehicles may be vivified, so that the higher worlds may open before us in succession.

In the body of man its home, as we have said, is at the base of the spine, and for the ordinary person it lies there unawakened, and its very presence unsuspected, during the whole of his life; and it is indeed far better to allow it thus to remain dormant until the man has made definite moral

development, until his will is strong enough to control it and his thoughts pure enough to enable him to face its awakening without injury. No one should experiment with it without definite instruction from a teacher who thoroughly understands the subject, for the dangers connected with it are very real and terribly serious. Some of them are purely physical. Its uncontrolled movement often produces intense physical pain, and it may readily tear tissues and even destroy physical life. This, however, is the least of the evils of which it is capable, for it may do permanent injury to vehicles higher than the physical.

One very common effect of rousing it prematurely is that it rushes downwards in the body instead of upwards, and thus excites the most undesirable passions—excites them and intensifies their effects to such a degree that it becomes absolutely impossible for the man to resist them, because a force has been brought into play in whose presence he is as helpless as a swimmer before the jaws of a shark. Such men become satyrs, monsters of depravity, because they are in the grasp of a force which is out of all proportion to the ordinary

human power of resistance. They may probably gain certain supernormal powers, but these will be such as will bring them into touch with a lower order of evolution with which humanity is intended to hold no commerce, and to escape from its awful thralldom may take them more than one incarnation. I am not in any way exaggerating the horror of this thing, as a person to whom it was all a matter of hearsay might unwittingly do. I have myself been consulted by people upon whom this awful fate has already come, and I have seen with my own eyes what happened to them. There is a school of black magic which purposely uses this power in this way, in order that through it may be vivified those lower force-centres which are never used by the followers of the Good Law.

Even apart from this greatest of its dangers, its premature unfoldment has many other unpleasant possibilities. It intensifies everything in the man's nature, and it reaches the lower and evil qualities more readily than the good. In the mental body, for example, ambition is very readily aroused, and soon swells to an incredibly inordinate degree. It would be likely to bring with it

a great intensification of the power of intellect, but at the same time it would produce abnormal and satanic pride, such as is quite inconceivable to the ordinary man. It is not wise for a man to think that he is prepared to cope with any force that may arise within his body; this is no ordinary force, but something resistless. Assuredly no uninstructed man should ever try to awaken it, and if such an one finds that it has been aroused by accident he should at once consult some one who fully understands these matters.

It may be noticed that I have specially and intentionally refrained from explaining how this arousing is to be done, or mentioning the order in which the force (when aroused) should be passed through these various centres, for that should by no means be attempted except at the express suggestion of a Master, who will watch over His pupil during the various stages of the experiment.

I most solemnly warn all students against making any effort whatever in the direction of awakening these tremendous forces, except under such qualified tuition, for I have myself seen many

cases of the terrible effects which follow from ignorant and ill-advised meddling with these very serious matters. The force is a tremendous reality, one of the great basic facts of nature, and most emphatically it is not a thing to be played with, or to be lightly taken in hand, for to experiment with it without understanding it is far more dangerous than it would be for a child to play with nitroglycerine. As is very truly said in the *Hathayogapradipika*: "It gives liberation to yogis and bondage to fools." (iii. 107.)

In matters such as these, students so often seem to think that some special exception to the laws of nature will be made in their case, that some special intervention of providence will save them from the consequences of their folly. Assuredly nothing of that sort will happen, and the man who wantonly provokes an explosion is quite likely to become its first victim. It would save much trouble and disappointment if students could be induced to understand that in all matters connected with occultism we mean just exactly and literally what we say, and that it is applicable in every case without exception. For there is

no such thing as favouritism in the working of the great laws of the universe.

Everybody wants to try all possible experiments; everybody is convinced that he is quite ready for the highest possible teaching and for any sort of development, and no one is willing to work patiently along at the improvement of character, and to devote his time and his energies to doing something useful for the work of the Society, waiting for all these other things until a Master shall announce that he is ready for them. The old aphorism still remains true: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

There are some cases in which the fire wakes spontaneously, so that a dull glow is felt; it may even begin to move of itself, though this is rare. In this latter case it would be likely to cause great pain, as, since the passages are not prepared for it, it would have to clear its way by actually burning up a great deal of etheric dross—a process that cannot but engender suffering. When it thus awakes of itself or is accidentally aroused, it usually tries to rush up the interior of

the spine, instead of following the spiral course into which the occultist is trained to guide it. If it be possible, the will should be set in motion to arrest its onward rush, but if that proves to be impossible (as is most likely) no alarm need be felt. It will probably rush out through the head and escape into the surrounding atmosphere, and it is likely that no harm will result beyond a slight weakening. Nothing worse than a temporary loss of consciousness need be apprehended. The really appalling dangers are connected not with its upward rush, but with the possibility of its turning downwards and inwards.

Its principal function in connection with occult development is that by being sent through the force-centres in the etheric body, as above described, it vivifies these centres and makes them available as gates of connection between the physical and astral bodies. It is said in *The Voice of the Silence* that when the serpent-fire reaches the centre between the eyebrows and fully vivifies it, it confers the power of hearing the voice of the Master—which means in this case the voice of

the ego or higher self. The reason for this statement is that when the pituitary body is brought into working order it forms a perfect link with the astral vehicle, so that through it all communications from within can be received.

It is not only this one; all the higher force-centres have presently to be awakened, and each must be made responsive to all kinds of astral influences from the various astral sub-planes. This development will come to all in due course, but most people cannot gain it during the present incarnation, if it is the first in which they have begun to take these matters seriously in hand. Some Indians might succeed in doing so, as their bodies are by heredity more adaptable than most others; but it is really for the majority the work of a later round altogether. The conquest of the serpent-fire has to be repeated in each incarnation, since the vehicles are new each time, but after it has been once thoroughly achieved these repetitions will be an easy matter. It must be remembered that its action varies with different types of people; some, for example, would see the higher self rather than hear its voice. Again, this connection

with the higher has many stages; for the personality it means the influence of the ego, but for the ego himself it means the power of the monad, and for the monad in turn it means to become a conscious expression of the LOGOS.

It may be of use if I mention my own experience in this matter. In the earlier part of my residence in India twenty-five years ago I made no effort to rouse the fire—not indeed knowing very much about it, and having the opinion that, in order to do anything with it, it was necessary to be born with a specially psychic body, which I did not possess. But one day one of the Masters made a suggestion to me with regard to a certain kind of meditation which would evoke this force. Naturally I at once put the suggestion into practice, and in course of time was successful. I have no doubt, however, that He watched the experiment, and would have checked me if it had become dangerous. I am told that there are Indian ascetics who teach this to their pupils, of course keeping them under careful supervision during the process. But I do not myself know of any such, nor should I have confidence in

them unless they were specially recommended by some one whom I knew to be possessed of real knowledge.

People often ask me what I advise them to do with regard to the arousing of this force. I advise them to do exactly what I myself did. I recommend them to throw themselves into Theosophical work and wait until they receive a definite command from some Master who will undertake to superintend their psychic development, continuing in the meantime all the ordinary exercises of meditation that are known to them. They should not care in the least whether such development comes in this incarnation or in the next, but should regard the matter from the point of view of the ego and not of the personality, feeling absolutely certain that the Masters are always watching for those whom They can help, that it is entirely impossible for any one to be overlooked, and that They will unquestionably give Their directions when They think that the right time has come.

I have never heard that there is any sort of age limit with regard to the development, and I do not see that age should make any difference, so long as one has

perfect health ; but the health is a necessity, for only a strong body can endure the strain, which is much more serious than any one who has not made the attempt can possibly imagine.

The force when aroused must be very strictly controlled, and it must be moved through the centres in an order which differs for people of different types. The movement also, to be effective, must be made in a particular way, which the Master will explain when the time comes.

I have said that the astral and etheric centres are in very close correspondence; but between them, and interpenetrating them in a manner not readily describable, is a sheath or web of closely woven texture, a sheath composed of a single layer of physical atoms much compressed and permeated by a special form of vital force. The divine life which normally descends from the astral body to the physical is so attuned as to pass through this with perfect ease, but it is an absolute barrier to all other forces—all which cannot use the atomic matter of both the planes. This web is the natural protection provided by nature to prevent a premature

opening up of communication between the planes—a development which could lead to nothing but injury.

It is this which under normal conditions prevents clear recollection of what has happened during sleep, and it is this also which causes the momentary unconsciousness which always occurs at death. But for this merciful provision the ordinary man, who knows nothing about all these things and is entirely unprepared to meet them, could at any moment be brought by any astral entity under the influence of forces to cope with which would be entirely beyond his strength. He would be liable to constant obsession by any being on the astral plane who desired to seize upon his vehicles.

It will therefore be readily understood that any injury to this web is a serious disaster. There are several ways in which injury may come, and it behoves us to use our best endeavours to guard against it. It may come either by accident or by continued malpractice. Any great shock to the astral body, such for example as a sudden terrible fright, may rend apart this delicate organism and, as it is commonly expressed, drive the man mad. (Of course

there are other ways in which fear may cause insanity, but this is one). A tremendous outburst of anger may also produce the same effect. Indeed it may follow upon any exceedingly strong emotion of an evil character which produces a kind of explosion in the astral body.

The malpractices which may more gradually injure this protective web are of two classes—the use of alcohol or narcotic drugs and the deliberate endeavour to throw open the doors which nature has kept closed, by means of such a process, as is described in spiritualistic parlance as sitting for development. Certain drugs and drinks—notably alcohol and all the narcotics, including tobacco—contain matter which on breaking up volatilises, and some of it passes from the physical plane to the astral. (Even tea and coffee contain this matter, but in quantities so infinitesimal that it is usually only after long-continued abuse of them that the effect manifests itself).

When this takes place in the body of man these constituents rush out through the force-centres in the opposite direction to that for which they are intended, and

in doing this repeatedly they seriously injure and finally destroy the delicate web. This deterioration or destruction may be brought about in two different ways, according to the type of the person concerned and to the proportion of the constituents in his etheric and astral bodies. First, the rush of volatilising matter actually burns away the web, and therefore leaves the door open to all sorts of irregular forces and evil influences.

The second result is that these volatile constituents, in flowing through, somehow harden the atom so that its pulsation is to a large extent checked and crippled, and it is no longer capable of being vitalised by the particular type of force which welds it into a web. The result of this is a kind of ossification of the web, so that instead of having too much coming through from one plane to the other, we have very little of any kind coming through.

We may see the effects of both these types of deterioration in the case of men who yield themselves to drunkenness. Some of those who are affected in the former way fall into delirium tremens,

obsession or insanity ; but those are after all comparatively rare. Far more common is the second type of deterioration—the case in which we have a kind of general deadening down of the man's qualities, resulting in gross materialism, brutality and animalism, in the loss of all finer feelings and of the power to control himself. He no longer feels any sense of responsibility ; he may love his wife and children when sober, but when the fit of drunkenness comes upon him he will use the money which should have bought bread for them to satisfy his own bestial cravings, the affection and the responsibility having apparently entirely disappeared.

The second type of effect is very commonly to be seen among those who are slaves of the tobacco habit ; again and again we find that they persist in their self-indulgence even when they know perfectly well that it causes nausea and misery to their neighbours. We shall recognise the deterioration at once when we think that this is the only practice in which a gentleman will persist when he is aware that it causes acute annoyance to others. Clearly in this case the finer feelings have already been seriously blunted.

All impressions which pass from one plane to the other are intended to come only through the atomic sub-planes, as I have said; but when this deadening process sets in, it presently infects not only other atomic matter, but matter of even the second and third sub-planes, so that the only communication between the astral and the etheric is when some force acting on the lower sub-planes (upon which only unpleasant and evil influences are to be found) happens to be strong enough to compel a response by the violence of its vibration.

Nevertheless, though nature takes such precautions to guard these centres, she by no means intends that they shall always be kept rigidly closed. There is a proper way in which they may be opened. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the intention is not that the doors should be opened any wider than their present position, but that the man should so develop himself as that he can bring a great deal more through the recognised channel.

• The consciousness of the ordinary man cannot yet use pure atomic matter either in the physical body or in the astral, and therefore there is normally no possibility for him of

conscious communication at will between the two planes. The proper way to obtain that is to purify both the vehicles until the atomic matter in both is fully vivified, so that all communications between the two may be able to pass by that road. In that case the web retains to the fullest degree its position and activity, and yet is no longer a barrier to the perfect communication, while it still continues to fulfil its purpose of preventing the close contact between lower sub-planes which would permit all sorts of undesirable influences to pass through.

That is why we are always adjured to wait for the unfolding of psychic powers until they come in the natural course of events as a consequence of the development of character, as we see from the study of these force-centres that they surely will. That is the natural evolution; that is the only really safe way, for by it the student obtains all the benefits and avoids all the dangers. That is the Path which our Masters have trodden in the past; that therefore is the Path for us to-day.

OBSESSION AND INSANITY

We must distinguish carefully between obsession and insanity. The latter is a break in the connection between the ego and his vehicles, while the former is the ousting of the ego by some other entity. Only a weak ego would permit obsession—an ego, I mean, who had not much hold upon his vehicles. It is not as a rule true that children are more easily obsessed than adults, because though it is true that the hold of the ego upon its bodies is less strong in childhood, it is also true that the adult is far more likely to have in him qualities which attract undesirable entities and make obsession easy. In the case of a little child, any entity trying to obsess the body would have first to face the elemental who is in charge of the building of it, and he is not at all likely to succeed in ousting that. After the age of seven, when the elemental has been withdrawn, obsession might take place if the ego was very weak; but it is fortunately rare.

Obsession may be permanent or temporary, and it is undertaken for various

reasons. Often some dead person is filled with burning anxiety to come again into touch with the physical plane, generally for the satisfaction of the lowest and grossest desires, and in his desperate yearning he seizes upon any vehicle which he can steal. Sometimes, on the other hand, obsession is a definite and calculated act of revenge—not always upon the person obsessed. I knew a case in which 'a man who hated another deliberately went to work to obtain control of and obsess his enemy's favourite daughter; I know also of another instance even worse than that. Sometimes the obsessing entity is not human at all, but only a nature-spirit who desires experience of human life. In any and all cases obsession should be determinedly resisted by the victim.

Insanity is an entirely different matter. Let us try to look at it from the occult point of view. Every cell in the physical brain and every particle of its matter has its corresponding and interpenetrating astral matter; and behind (or rather within) that, it has also the still finer mental matter. Of course the brain is a cubical mass, but for the purposes of our examination let us

suppose that it could be spread out upon a surface so that it should be only one particle thick. Then further suppose that the astral and mental matter belonging to it could also be laid out in layers in a similar manner, the astral layer a little above the physical, and the mental a little above the astral.

Then we should have three layers of matter of different degrees of density all corresponding one to the other. Now suppose that each physical particle is joined to the corresponding astral particle by a little tube, and each astral particle is joined to its corresponding mental particle in the same way, and even (higher up still) each mental particle to something which corresponds to it in the causal body. So long as all these tubes were perfectly in alignment there would be clear communication between the ego and his brain; but if any one of the sets of tubes were bent, closed, or knocked partially aside, it is obvious that the communication might be wholly or partially interrupted.

From the occult standpoint, therefore, we divide the insane into four great classes, each of course having many sub-divisions.

1. Those who are insane merely from a defect of the dense physical brain—from its insufficient size, perhaps, or from some accident like a heavy blow, or some growth which causes pressure upon it, or from gradual softening of the tissue.

2. Those whose defect is in the etheric part of the brain, so that its particles no longer correspond perfectly with the denser physical particles, and so cannot properly bring through the vibrations from the higher vehicles.

3. Those in whom the astral body is defective instead of the etheric—in whom its tubes are bent, as it were, so that there is a want of accurate adjustment between its particles and those of the vehicles either above or below it.

4. Those in whom the mind-body itself is in some way out of order, and consequently is unable to bring through the instructions or wishes of the ego.

It makes a very great difference to which of these classes an insane person belongs. Those of the first and second types are quite sensible when out of the body during sleep, and of course also after death, so that the ego loses only the expression of himself

during waking life. Those of the third type do not recover until they reach the heaven-world, and the fourth class not until they return into the causal body ; so that for this last class the incarnation is a failure. But fortunately more than ninety per cent of the insane belong to the first and second classes.

Three questions are asked upon the unsavoury subject of obsession ; I will proceed to answer them. The first is : “ What is the best way to get rid of an excarnate human being who persists in occupying one’s body ? ”

I should simply and absolutely decline to be so obsessed. The best and kindest plan would be to have an explanation with the dead person, to enquire what he wants and why he makes such persistent attempts. Quite probably, he may be some ignorant soul who does not at all comprehend his new surroundings, and is striving madly to get into touch again with the only kind of life that he understands. In that case if matters are explained to him, he may be brought to a happier frame of mind and induced to cease his ill-directed efforts. Or the poor creature may have something on his mind—some duty unfulfilled or some

wrong unrighted ; if this be so, and the matter can be arranged to his satisfaction, he may then be at peace.

If, however, he proves not to be amenable to reason, if in spite of all argument and explanation he refuses to abandon his reprehensible line of action, it will be necessary gently but firmly to resist him. Every man has an inalienable right to the use of his own vehicles, and encroachments of this nature should not be permitted. If the lawful possessor of the body will confidently assert himself and use his own will-power no obsession can take place.

When such things occur, it is almost always because the victim has in the first place voluntarily yielded himself to the invading influence, and his first step therefore is to reverse that act of submission, to determine strongly to take matters into his own hands again and to resume control over his property. It is this reassertion of himself that is the fundamental requirement, and though much help may be given by wise friends, nothing which they can do will take the place of the development of will-power on the part of the victim, or obviate the necessity for it. The exact method of procedure will

naturally vary according to the details of the case.

The second question runs thus: "I have long been troubled by entities who constantly suggest evil ideas and make use of coarse and violent language. They are always urging me to take strong drink, and goading me on to the consumption of large quantities of meat. I have prayed earnestly, but with little avail, and am driven to my wits' end. What can I do?"

You have indeed suffered greatly; but now you must make up your mind to suffer no more. You must take courage and make a firm stand. The power of these dead people over you is only in your fear of them. Your own will is stronger than all theirs combined if you will only know that it is; if you turn upon them with vigour and determination they must yield before you. You have an inalienable right to the undisturbed use of your own vehicles, and you should insist on being left in peace. You would not tolerate an intrusion of filthy and disgusting beings into your house on the physical plane; why should you submit to it because the entities happen to be astral? If an insolent tramp forces

himself into a man's house, the owner does not kneel down and pray—he kicks the tramp out; and that is precisely what you must do with these astral tramps.

You will no doubt say to yourself that when I give you this advice I do not know the terrible power of the particular demons who are afflicting you. That is exactly what they would like you to believe—what they will try to make you believe; but do not be so foolish as to listen to them. I know the type perfectly, and mean, despicable, bullying villains they are; they will torment a weak woman for months together, but will fly in cowardly terror the moment you turn upon them in righteous anger! I should just laugh at them, but I would drive them out, and hold not a moment's parley with them. Of course they will bluster and show fight, because you have let them have their own way for so long that they will not tamely submit to expulsion; but face them with iron determination, set your will against them like an immovable rock, and down they will go. Say to them: "I am a spark of the divine fire, and by the power of the God within me I order you to depart!" Never let yourself think for an instant of

the possibility of failure or of yielding ; God is within you, and God cannot fail.

The fact of their demanding meat shows what low and coarse entities they are ; you should avoid all flesh-food and alcohol, because these things minister to such evil beings and make it more difficult for you to resist them.

The third question is : “ If it is possible for a man to become obsessed while he has temporarily lost control of his body during a fit of anger, is it not also possible for obsession to take place when one is out of the body during sleep ? ”

I would submit that the circumstances are entirely different. Sleep is a natural condition, and though the ego leaves the body, he always maintains a close connection with it, so that under ordinary circumstances he would quickly be recalled to it by any attempt that might be made upon it. There are individual cases in which the ego is not so easily recalled, and a sort of temporary obsession is possible which may cause somnambulism, but these cases are abnormal and comparatively rare. A fit of anger on the other hand is unnatural—an infraction of the natural laws under which we

live. In this case it is the astral which has escaped from control; the desire-elemental has rebelled against his master and has broken away from the hold of the ego exercised through the mental body, which alone keeps him safe as part of an astral mechanism. The rightful owner being dispossessed, the astral body is in the condition of a vessel whose helm has been abandoned; anyone who happens to be at hand can seize the wheel, and it may be a difficult matter to recover it.

SLEEP

I am asked what is the real cause of sleep.

I have not the detailed physiological knowledge which is needed to answer this question fully. But I have always understood that the necessity of sleep is due to the fact that the bodies grow tired of one another. The astral vehicle, which so far as we know is practically incapable of fatigue upon its own plane, since it can work incessantly for twenty years without showing

signs of it, very soon becomes tired of the heavy labour of moving the particles of the physical brain, and needs a considerable period of separation from it to enable it to gather strength to resume the irksome task.

The physical body, on its side, also becomes worn out, because while it is in a waking condition it is always spending force a little faster than it can draw it in. With every thought or feeling, and with every muscular exertion, certain slight chemical changes appear to take place. The ordinary machinery of a healthy body is all the while working to counteract this change and to restore the condition previously existing, but in this it never quite succeeds. So that with every thought or action there is a slight, almost imperceptible loss, and the cumulative effect eventually leaves the physical body too exhausted to be capable of further thought or work. In some cases even a few moments of sleep will give the recuperative powers an opportunity to reassert themselves and regain the ground that they have lost, thus restoring the balance sufficiently to enable the machine to go on working.

• Students often ask what is the best time for sleep. Unquestionably the rule of nature

is that the day is for work and the night is for rest, and no infringement of nature's laws can ever be a good thing. One of the serious evils of our modern unnatural life is that noon is no longer, as it should be, the centre of the day. If a man lived by himself and could regulate his own affairs he could, no doubt, return at once to that obviously natural condition; but, surrounded as we are by a mighty so-called civilisation which is in many ways distorted and unnatural, we are unable to follow our individual predilections in this matter, and must to some extent adapt ourselves to the general custom, evil though it be.

It is impossible to lay down rules as to the amount of sleep which is necessary for man, because there is so much difference in constitutions; but when it is possible that sleep should be taken between 8 P. M. and 5 A. M. Some men need the whole of that time, while others may find themselves perfectly healthy on a smaller allowance. Such details of life each man must decide for himself according to his circumstances.

People often ask whether there is any way in which they can control their dreams. The dreamer cannot usually change the

course of his dream while it is going on ; but the dream-life can indirectly be controlled to a very considerable extent. If a man's thought be pure and high while waking, his dreams will be pure and good also, and a specially important point is that his last thought as he sinks to sleep should be a noble and elevating one, since that strikes the keynote which largely determines the nature of the dreams which follow. An evil or impure thought draws round the thinker evil and impure influences, attracts to him all the gross and loathsome creatures who come near him. These will, in turn, react upon his mind and his astral body, and disturb his rest by awakening all kinds of low and earthly desires. If, on the other hand, a man enters the portals of sleep with his mind fixed upon high and holy things, he thereby draws round him the elementals created by like effort in others ; his rest is peaceful, his mind open to impressions from above and closed to those from below, for he has set it working in the right direction.

The dreaming of ordinary events does not interfere with astral work, because that dreaming is all taking place in the physical

brain, while the real man is away attending to other business. Of course if the man, when out in his astral body, devotes himself to thinking over the events of his physical life, he will be unable during the time of such thought to do any other work, but that is a totally different thing from a mere ordinary dream of the physical brain, though when the man wakes in the morning it is frequently difficult for him to distinguish between the two sets of recollections. It really does not matter what the physical brain does so long as it keeps itself free from impure thoughts, but it is undesirable that the man himself should waste his time in introspection when he might be working on the astral plane.

SOMNAMBULISM

You ask what is the cause of sleep-walking. I have never had the opportunity of observing a case of somnambulism, so I am unable to speak from direct knowledge; but from reading accounts of such cases I should imagine that the phenomena may be

produced by several widely different causes. There are instances in which it appears that the ego is able to act more directly upon his physical body during the absence of the intermediate mental and astral vehicles—instances in which a man during his sleep is able to write poetry or to paint pictures which would be far beyond his powers when awake.

There are other cases in which it is obvious that the dim consciousness inherent in the physical body is working uncontrolled by the man himself, so that it performs quite meaningless acts, or carries out to some extent the idea which was dominant in the mind before falling asleep. To this class belong the stories of servants who have risen in the middle of the night to light the fire, of ostlers who have harnessed horses in their sleep, and so on.

Again, there are cases in which some outside intelligence, whether incarnate or discarnate, has seized upon the body of a sleeping man and used it for his own ends. This would be most likely to happen with a person who is what is called mediumistic—that is to say, whose

principles are more loosely joined together than usual, and therefore more readily separable; but oddly enough there seems to be a type of somnambulism which is due to a directly opposite condition, when the principles fit more tightly than usual, so that when the man would naturally visit some neighbouring spot in his astral body, he takes the physical body along with him as well, because he is not wholly dissociated from it. Somnambulism is probably also connected with the whole complex problem of the various layers of consciousness in man, which under perfectly normal circumstances are unable to manifest themselves.

THE PHYSICAL BODY

Physical immortality is not a possibility, for that which has a beginning must also have an end, and birth, growth, decay and death are the rules of the physical universe. No reasonable being could desire to retain the same body continuously; it is precisely as though a small child should wish to wear the same suit of clothes during the

whole of his life. As man evolves, his successive vehicles will become purer and nobler, and better fitted to meet the needs of his increasing capacity, so that even if a man could keep the same body he would check his growth by doing so, just as the child's growth would be checked by always wearing something of iron rigidity which was much too tight for him.

At the same time it is our duty to take the best possible care of our bodies and to improve them as much as we can. Never ill-treat the physical body. Take care of it as you would of a valuable horse, giving it enough rest and food, and keeping it scrupulously clean. It can do only a certain amount of work; for example, a very strong body might walk a hundred miles without resting, but it could not walk a thousand. In meditation put it into a comfortable position and then forget about it. You cannot forget it if it is uncomfortable, as it would constantly call you back.

What should you eat? Well, so long as you avoid alcohol and corpse-eating it probably does not matter very much. Certain vegetables are coarser than others, and therefore when there is a choice it is as well

to abstain from them. Among those I should class onions, mushrooms and cabbages. Rice is very pure food, but wheat, barley and oats give more nutriment in the same amount. I consider eggs undesirable, though I should unhesitatingly take them if no other food was to be had.

There is no sort of question that vegetarianism is better in every way than the devouring of flesh. It furnishes more real nutriment, diminishes the liability to disease, gives greater strength, and does not stimulate the lower nature. The vegetarian diet makes it far easier for a man to develop his higher qualities. It is known that our Masters make a single physical body last much longer than an ordinary man can do, by living always in accordance with hygienic laws and by absolute freedom from worry. In that respect we should all try to copy them as nearly as we can, but to endeavour to retain the same body indefinitely has always been a mark of those who follow the selfish path.

There are various undesirable means by which such men have prolonged physical life—sometimes by vampirism, merely depleting the vitality of others, and sometimes

by the complete transference to themselves of a succession of other human lives. But it is hardly necessary to warn Theosophists against proceedings of this nature. It is obvious that a person adopting such a plan would be one who is *not* evolving; and even if he succeeded he would only be as it were patching and enlarging an old coat, but with all his efforts it would remain an old coat still.

TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL

The evil effect of the tobacco habit is obvious in the physical, the astral and the mental bodies. It permeates the man physically with exceedingly impure particles, causing emanations so material that they are frequently perceptible to the sense of smell. Astrally, it not only introduces impurity, but it also tends to deaden many of the vibrations, and it is for this reason that it is frequently found to 'soothe the nerves,' as it is called. But, of course, for occult progress we do not want the vibrations deadened nor the astral body weighed down with foul and

poisonous particles. We need the capacity of answering instantly to all possible vibrations, and yet at the same time we must have perfect control, so that these desires shall be as horses guided by the intelligent mind to draw us where we will, not to run away with us wildly, and carry us into situations where our higher nature knows that it ought never to be found. Therefore, for any person who is really anxious to develop his various vehicles, tobacco is undoubtedly a bad thing.

Also it has a singularly deteriorating influence upon the man on the physical plane. It is absolutely the only thing, so far as I know, that a gentleman will deliberately do when he knows it to be offensive to others. But the hold which this noxious habit gains upon its slaves appears to be so great that they are utterly incapable of resisting it, and all their gentlemanly instincts are forgotten in this mad and horrible selfishness. The effect on the astral body after death is also very bad; the man is shut up for a long time as though in prison, and higher vibrations cannot reach him.

The chief objection which is always brought by the more self-indulgent Theo-

sophist against remarks such as these is that our great founder Madame Blavatsky herself smoked. I know this to be true, but it does not in the least alter the facts which I have stated above, which I know just as surely from long-continued personal observation. Madame Blavatsky was in every way so entirely *sui generis*, so emphatically a case apart, that I do not think it reasonable for us to presume that we can safely do what she did. I have often heard her say: "No one but my Master understands my case; do what I tell you, not what I do." Also she once told me that she smoked incessantly "to quiet the vibrations of this old body, and prevent it from shaking itself to pieces." The effects on the physical plane during life and on the astral after death are precisely as I have described them, and it does not seem worth while incurring them for the sake of a petty indulgence.

I think that Mrs. Besant's remarks about alcohol in *Man and His Bodies* are fully justified. There is no doubt whatever that from the point of view of the astral and mental bodies its use is always an evil; and there is also no doubt at all that very

undesirable entities are attracted by it. Of course many people who are estimable in other respects have certain most unpleasant habits, such as the drinking of alcohol, the eating of meat or the smoking of tobacco; but the fact that they are otherwise good people does not make these things good and sensible. It is, of course, untrue that any of these things are physical necessities, but a man may accustom his system to the use of almost any kind of drug, until that system, being habituated to it, expects it and misses it if it does not get it. We know that exactly the same habit may be set up with opium and arsenic, but that does not make opium and arsenic good things to take. It is, however, generally quite useless to attempt to argue with any man as to his personal habits; he is usually determined to cling to such habits because he likes them, and he cares very little whether they are good in themselves, or even good for him.

You ask my opinion about the regulation of the sale of liquor. In all civilised countries some control is exercised over the sale of poisons, and they are allowed to be supplied only upon a doctor's certificate.

The poison of alcohol does many thousands of times more harm than all other poisons put together, so surely the regulations governing its sale ought to be no less strict.

It is perfectly true that every man will have to develop self-control for himself, but I really do not see how that affects our attitude with regard to the making of laws. You surely would not suggest that in order to teach people not to steal, we should continually at every street corner throw in their way special temptations to induce them to steal, and then stand by without any interference to see whether they would develop sufficient strength of mind to resist our temptations.

Yet that is exactly what is now being done with regard to the consumption of alcohol. We allow, encourage and specially license a number of men to make a tempting display in our streets with the avowed object of trying to induce as many people as possible to degrade themselves by the habitual use of this poison. If at last mankind is so far evolving as to develop some sort of conscience with regard to the weaker brethren, it would seem well for us to encourage their advancement rather than to range

ourselves against it. If we feel it right to care for and to help the insane, even to the extent of restraining them for their own good and for that of the public, it is surely well for us also to treat the victim of that terrible form of insanity known as drunkenness along exactly the same lines. But it must not be forgotten that the Theosophical Society takes no part whatever in any political movement, although of course its members as private individuals are perfectly free to take any side that they like in political questions.

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